

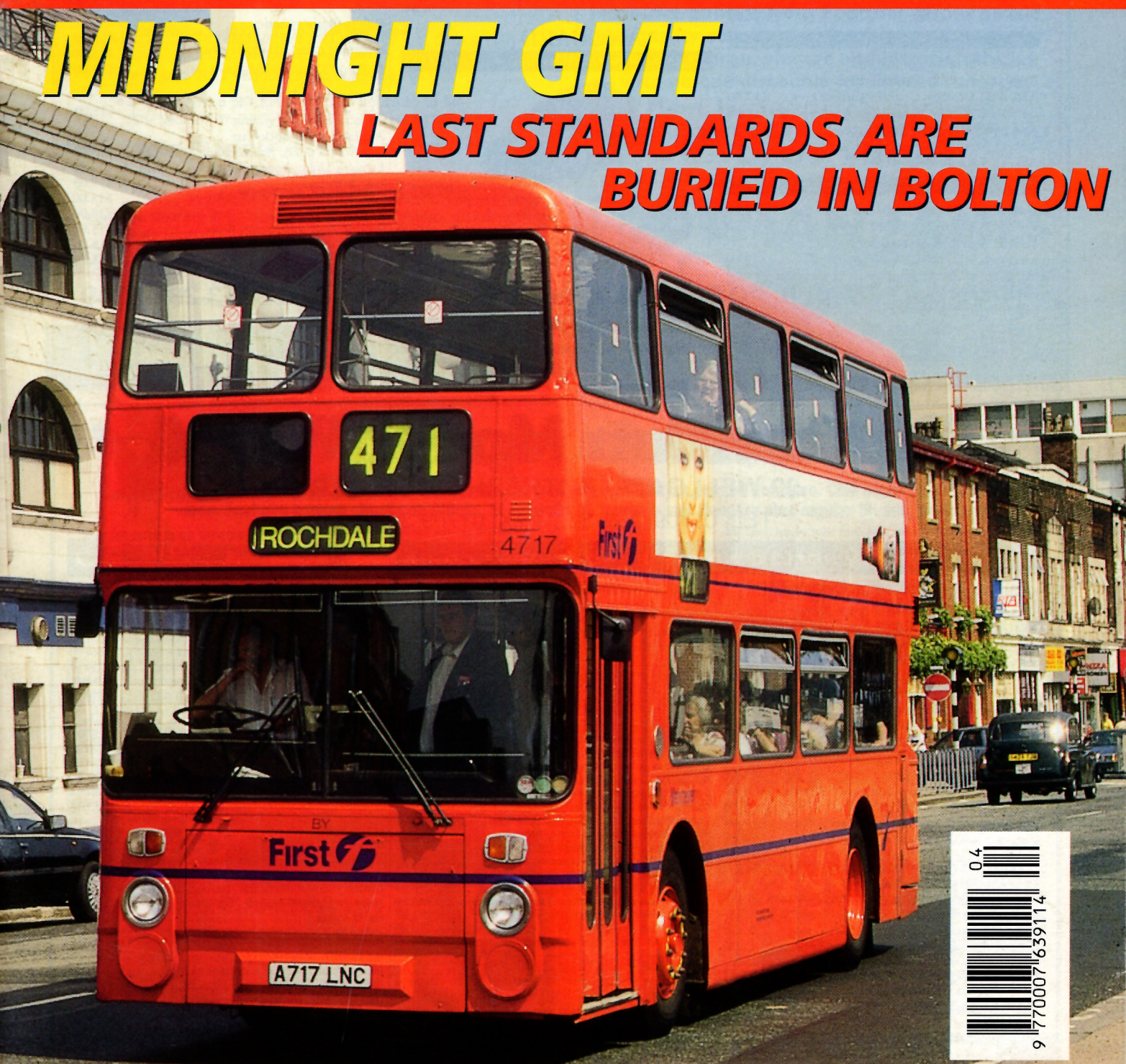
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VANGUARD (1:43 SCALE)

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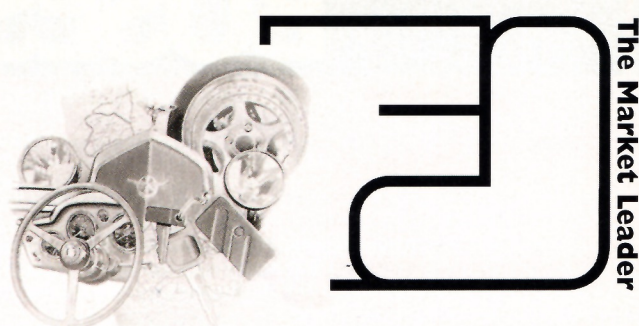
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914. Lathalmond, Scottish National Bus Museum Open Weekend, UK. Buses, Scotland, August 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer featuring an early morning look at the buses lined up, arrivals at the site up to Sat lunchtime then a series of cab rides to Dunfermline and around the museum site, highly recommended.

915. London, UK. Buses, Sept 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer featuring central London areas around Oxford and Regent Streets with an abundance of RM and RML offside and nearside shots on a Saturday.

918. Ireland, Buses, August, 2001, 60 minutes filmed by Dave Spencer visiting Waterford and Limerick, depot visits at each. New bus station in Waterford, glorious sunny weather at both locations and lots of new buses delivered since last visit.

919. Ireland, Buses, August 2001, 60 minutes featuring visits to Cork, Tralee and Sligo, all in glorious sunny weather and including depot visits at each location plus the yard of dealer Mat Kavanagh at Tipperary.

920. Ulster, Northern Ireland / Ireland, Buses, September 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer, rural Lough Swilly services in Donegal then visits to Strabane, Limavady, Coleraine, Ballymena, Antrim, Larne, Carrickfergus and Bangor with depot visits in each location.

921. Amberley AEC Running Day, UK, Buses, September 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer. A lovely sunny autumn day as buses of AEC manufacture arrive at Amberley working museum many taking part in the free internal bus museum plus scenes of the museums attractions.

922. EFE Showbus, Duxford, September 2001, UK. Buses, Part One of two volumes each lasting 60 minutes, filmed by Dave Spencer and covering the earlier arrivals as they enter the showground.

923. EFE Showbus, Duxford, September 2001, UK. Buses, Part Two of two volumes each lasting 60 minutes nd filmed by Dave Spencer, the remaining arrivals up to lunchtime.

924. East Sussex, UK. Buses, 2000-2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer with scenes at Rye and Hastings July / Sept 2001 and short sequences in Bexhill between 11/2000 and 9/2001, we finish with Eastbourne 11/2000 and 9/2001 with some Kent 7/2001 filler.

925. Ghent / Gent / Gant Tram, Trolleybus, Bus, Belgium, October 2001, 57 minutes by Dave Spencer filmed to illustrate the Siemens low floor trams of the Dresden design plus refurbished PCCS, all over adverts, trolleys and buses. Track and

overhead work, new station layout.

926. Mauritius, Port Louis, Buses, Oct 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer featuring the numerous operators in the diminutive capital city, lots of Ashok Leylands, Tatas and Jap high floor buses, some big companies and hundreds of smaller outfits.

927. Mauritius, Curepipe etc. Buses, Oct 2001, 60 mins by Dave Spencer, under the tropical sun with the hectic bus scene in Curepipe, Quatre Bornes and Rosehill, includes 2001 deliveries from Tata and Air Con buses of Rosehill, numerous operators.

928. Commercial, 2001 Commercial Year Book, Over 60 minutes by Dave Spencer starting with a spring visit to Valencia docks in Spain, then a few summer scenes in Dublin and finishing with Mauritius in the Indian Ocean with plenty of old UK lorries of TK era.

929. West Midlands, UK. Buses, Oct 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer and visiting Birmingham City Centre for diversions around reconstruction work, the first of the new registrations '51' series and then on to West Bromwich where we conclude.

930. London, UK. Bus, 1970s 60 minutes using archive cine film by Alan Mortimer. A trip through a decade of London Transport and London County operations complete with authentic sounds. Good quality footage - RT, RM, RF era through to Titans.

931. Heart of the Pennines, UK. Bus, October 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer featuring the very last Piece Hall rally complete with free bus services to the Sportsman pub in the hills above Halifax, sponsored by PMP and benefiting from day long sunshine.

932. Malta, Bus, November 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer with a short autumn visit to update on the Maltese bus situation. We announce the bus number and with a PSV circle flight you can follow the interesting history of individual vehicles.

933. Malta, Bus, November 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer. This PMP visit contains the diversions caused by the remembrance day service and parade at the cenotaph with interesting scenic roads and twisting steep hills not normally served by buses.

936. Leicester, UK. Bus, November 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer bringing you the frantic Leicester bus scene with ex Southampton Atlanteans covering a vehicle shortage, new Arriva vehicles and competition from Anstey Bus and other local independents.

937. Bristol, UK. Bus, November 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer covering two visits starting with December 2000 and then November 2001. The story is one of transition to First Group Barbie 2 livery for their older buses, fleet numbers announced to aid ID.

938. Lisbon, Portugal, Trams, 2001, 60 minutes featuring a visit by Martin Jenkins in the summer for Carris 100th celebration of electric traction in Lisbon, lovely sunny weather plus 10 mins, trams and buses by Alan Mortimer filmed in 1972 with sound added.

939. Spain / Portugal, Trams, Buses, Trains, Filmed by Martin Jenkins, features the Oporto museum lines and the Sintra Atlantico route both in summer 2001. Our next section contains archive scenes from Lisbon in the early 1970s including trams. A very nice sequence from Majorca with DMUs, Electrics and Soller Tram. 1968 scenes of the trams in Barcelona and finally the amazing bus scene on Tenerife in 1972. The archive sequences all have fairly authentic sound tracks added.



940. Merseyside, UK. Buses, December 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer featuring Liverpool city centre and Birkenhead. The sale of Gilmore depot operations to Glenvale with MTS liveried Titans and Metrobuses is the main item of interest.

941. Oxford, UK. Buses, December 2001, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer, continues our annual coverage of Arriva and Trent operation in the city in early January starting with a foggy morning which lifts to a fine

942. Derby, UK. Buses, January 2002, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer, continues our annual coverage of Arriva and Trent operation in the city in early January starting with a foggy morning which lifts to a fine

mist. Lots of friendly drivers and plenty of vehicles.

943. Cumbria, UK. Buses, January 2002, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer starts in Barrow with new town centre bus layout then a short stop in Whitehaven before moving on to Workington and then finishing up at dusk in Carlisle, as usual fleet numbers announced.

944. Bus Spot Leicester, UK. Buses, 1960s to 2001. The first in a new series providing a detailed look at a location and the changing bus scene over the years. Starts with archive 1960s, 70s and 80s then almost annual video coverage. Features most operators in the city including independents, municipal through to First and Arriva era. Draws on the wealth of material in the PMP Archive, a splendid introduction, summary or taster to our Leicester coverage.

945. Bus Spot Cardiff, UK. Buses, 1960s to 2000. The second programme in our new series with a 10 minute archive cine section from trolleybuses in the 1960s through to the 1980s then video scenes taken on 6 visits up to 2000. Draws on material from the PMP archive and a good introduction, summary or taster to our Cardiff coverage. All operators seen are featured.

946. Bus Spot Liverpool, UK. Buses, 1960s to 2001. The third visit to a great British city bus centre with the first section drawn from our cine archives including views from the 1960s, 70s and 80s with authentic sounds. Then video coverage on annual visits, all operators featured as seen. A good introduction to developments on Merseyside especially post deregulation with the plethora of operators gradually fading away through the Titan era and finishing in the GTL and Arriva era.

947. West Yorkshire, UK. Buses, Jan 2002, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer. Our first destination is Bradford, the roads seem very quiet, the last weekend before the guided busway opened, our second stop is Leeds where rain soon gives way to brighter skies.

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ANDY IZATT



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Arriva ceased operating service 418 (Kingston-Guildford) on 22 February, five days before White Rose collapsed; London United has taken over the Kingston-Epsom section on behalf of Transport for London. It was introduced by East Surrey Traction (one of the larger companies absorbed into London Transport in 1933) on 4 June 1927, and was the last commercial route into Greater London that followed a broadly similar pattern to how it ran in LT days. Volvo Citybus/East Lancs 614 (G614 BPH) was photographed on Ewell Road, Surbiton on 16 February, Arriva's final Saturday on the route. PHILIP WALLIS

Cover picture: First Manchester 4717 (A717 LNC), a 1984 Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68D/1R 'Standard' leaving Bury for Rochdale several months before the type was finally withdrawn from service at the beginning of this year. STEWART J. BROWN

NO WAY TO RUN A BUS SERVICE

There is a none-too-delicious irony that the London Mayor pressed the 'go' button on plans to raise an extra £130 million for transport at the same time as residents of Surrey (annual service support budget £5.5 million) suffered the third independent bus operator collapse in 12 months.

You could hardly find a better illustration of the contrasting state of Britain's buses. On one hand, a capital city where public transport is booming, where there is widespread political acceptance that it should go on growing and where the nation's biggest operators are concentrating their investment in newer, larger and hopefully better vehicles. On the other, medium-sized towns — many clogged with private cars — lacking funds and political will to support even a basic bus service. Communities abandoned by those same big groups.

What makes this particular juxtaposition so disturbing is that it isn't being acted out at opposite ends of the country. It's not another symptom of a north-south divide. It's all happening inside the M25, in one of London's relatively prosperous back yards. And if towns like Walton-on-Thames, Weybridge or Chertsey — all once served exclusively by London Transport — have been reduced to relying on fragile, over-stretched small businesses like the late lamented White Rose Travel, what hope is there for similar communities farther removed from the seat of national government?

Arriva wouldn't have pulled out of these suburban communities had they ever offered rich pickings for commercial operators. Its recent retreats were the culmination of decades of fares hikes and frequency reductions as successive operators tried to contain the corrosive effect of spiralling car use, labour costs and land values.

Yet these same communities — like similar ones throughout Britain — aren't universally prosperous. They have their council or former council estates, their less well off residents and those no longer able to drive safely. Families with one car rather than two, three or more. People who can be persuaded of the attractions of a good bus service. People who would rather not place themselves at the mercy of friends and minicabs.

People living in otherwise similar circumstances to those just over the Greater London boundary, where buses run seven days a week, often late at night, increasingly right through the night. People also served by commuter rail lines that would die without substantial annual subsidies. Subsidies, indeed, that most voters accept are as essential as those that fund our schools, hospitals and public roads.

It's a sad reflection of the perception of the bus that there hasn't been any national outcry about the interruption and longer-term threat to these towns' buses. Just imagine the expressions of righteous indignation had White Rose, Tillingbourne, Surrey Rider — or for that matter, Arriva Guildford & West Surrey — been providing so much as a branch line rural railway.

If we accept that there is a minimum level below which essential bus services should not fall in civilised, urban communities, then society must also accept that they need to be paid for. £5.5 million a year for a shrinking network that's only 60% commercial is nowhere near enough.

But that requires a political will and vision so far only evident in the elected London Mayor and in David Begg, the (unelected) chairman of the Commission for Integrated Transport. Neither transport minister Stephen Byers nor his shadow, Theresa May, has given us confidence to stop fearing that north-west Surrey is anything but the thin end of a potentially thick suburban wedge.

ALAN MILLAR



WILTING WHITE ROSE EXPOSES SORRY STATE OF SURREY BUSES

Large parts of Surrey were once again left without any service at the end of February following the collapse of 30-vehicle White Rose Travel on 27 February. STEPHEN MORRIS reports.

Herculean efforts by Surrey County Council meant disruption was kept to a minimum and within 48 hours it found cover for virtually all services, mainly using Tellings-Golden Miller and London United, although local operator Legg's Travel, apparently acquired in recent weeks by one of White Rose's senior managers, has also taken over some work.

This sort of crisis management is close to becoming second nature to the council, as the White Rose collapse followed nearly a year after Tillingbourne Bus

closed without warning and Surrey Rider's operator licence was withdrawn at short notice. It has also been through several rounds of retrenchment by Arriva.

Thorpe-based White Rose began life in 1999 and quickly built up a portfolio of services in the Staines and Kingston areas, mainly filling gaps left by the wholesale abandonment of local services by Arriva. Further expansion came by picking up former Tillingbourne services. It also ran school contracts.

Its fleet was characterised by vehicles in 1970s London Transport livery, including Leyland Titans and MCW Metrobuses, which were used on commercial services as well as school runs. New or nearly new low-floor

Dennis Darts followed with Caetano, Marshall and Plaxton bodywork. The operator quickly gained a reputation for its smart presentation and good reliability, and many of Arriva's astronomic fares were cut to more affordable levels, with notable beneficial effects on usage.

The strain began to tell, however, after recent expansion when reliability suffered and vehicles appeared unwashed, although reliability appeared to have been addressed again towards the end.

Routes included 39 (Knaphill-Woking), 218(Kingston-Staines), 451/461 (Kingston-Walton-Weybridge-Byfleet-St Peters Hospital/Staines), 566/567 (Staines-Virginia Water circulars), Sunday and evening services between Staines and Woking and from Heathrow to Windsor, several Guildford-area tendered services, including the evening service on the trunk 32 service to Dorking and Redhill and numerous other in-fill and schools services. It also provided four open-top Metrobuses for the City Sightseeing Windsor tour.

White Rose H119 THE, a former Metroliner Dennis Dart/Reeve Burgess Pointer, on an all-day tendered service in Guildford last September.

JOHN MARSH



STAGECOACH GROUNDS VARIOS

The reputation of the Mercedes-Benz Vario was dealt a blow on 19 February when Stagecoach withdrew all 101 of its examples to rectify their brake pedals.

It took this precaution after the brakes failed to operate on a Stagecoach Manchester Vario, causing it to crash into a garden in Hyde; by an ironic twist of circumstances, it ended up inches from the windows of the house of a passenger who was waiting to get off the bus. It transpired that the circumstances of the accident were similar to another involving a

Stagecoach Manchester Vario in Glossop on 31 January.

Apparently, part of the pedal assembly collapsed on both vehicles. The group took the precaution of withdrawing all of its Varios from service and replacing the suspect part in co-operation with the manufacturer. As detailed in this month's 'Fleet News', Stagecoach Manchester — with 43 of the group's Varios (a 44th was written off in an accident) — drafted in minibuses and large buses to cover for their brief absence.



Stagecoach Manchester 568 (R277 CBU), one of seven Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios acquired with the Glossopdale operations in 1999. The February accident involved similar bus 563, bought new by Stagecoach.

JOHN YOUNG

IN BRIEF

Men aged 60 to 64 will be entitled to concessionary bus travel in England and Wales from April next year.

Nottingham City Transport has extended a text message timetable service to 22 of its routes. Passengers are able to use their mobile phones to obtain details of buses' scheduled arrival times.

Warrington Borough Transport has only taken over two of three services recently deregistered by Arriva North West ('News' last month). Bennett's Coaches is operating service 104 on a reduced frequency.

ARRIVA SHUNS TRANSBUS

TransBus has missed out completely on orders for 158 buses placed by Arriva.

The orders — some details of which have already been announced — call for 19 more Volvo B7TLs with Wright Eclipse Gemini bodies similar to those already supplied to Arriva London, 76 DAF SB120s with Wright Cadet bodies and 53 DAF DB250s (24 with Optare Spectra bodies for Yorkshire and 29 with East Lancs Millennium Lowlander bodies for Fox County and Derby).

MARSHALL RESTRUCTURES AGAIN

Marshall Bus UK is to go through its second restructure in a year, following the sale of its Slovakian parent company.

Horizont Investment & Consulting, which bought the bodybuilder from the cars-to-aerospace Marshall group last year in partnership with the Marshall Bus management team, has itself been taken over by another company called Sipox Holdings. Marshall Bus managing director Vic Donaldson says Sipox has agreed to the release of shares 'to facilitate the investment expected from UK-based partners'.

This will provide the funds needed to invest in new products. 'We have a good current order book with over 100 new buses to build, together with a number of refurbishment contracts,' he adds.

'I will be restructuring the company to ensure

we are leaner and fitter. Additional funds are being negotiated and with the majority of the shareholding under control, I am now looking for serious partnerships that will benefit our company and will allow for planned growth.'

Marshall's plans include close co-operation with Turkish manufacturer BMC Sanayi, whose Cummins-engined 220SLF low-floor bus was shown at Coach & Bus 2001 last October.



YELLOW SCHOOL BUSES GET TO WORK IN NORTH AND SOUTH

Eight of First's American yellow school buses took to the roads of West Yorkshire and north-west Surrey during February, and another 11 of the pilot fleet of 20 are rumoured to be earmarked for a third project in Wrexham. They carry the First Student branding of the group's extensive yellow bus operations in North America.

The Yorkshire scheme started on 18 February, with two completely new timetabled routes traversing some of the county's most challenging terrain. They link six junior schools in Hebden Bridge and Heptonstall, whose opening times have been staggered to make the project work. They were followed seven days later by the larger Surrey scheme in the borough of Runnymede, when the Magna Carta (Egham) and Fullbrook (New Haw) schools returned after half-term.

First Calderline has two Blue Bird All-American RE 60-seaters for the Hebden Bridge services, with a third held as a spare; if it's needed elsewhere, the spare bus will be replaced by a rebodied Leyland Leopard cascaded from York. First Beeline is running five Blue Birds from a Runnymede Borough Council depot in Chertsey — technically an outstation of Slough depot.

The yellow bus concept is to use dedicated drivers appointed specifically for the job, and Calderline has recruited two part-timers, who operate the same vehicle on the same route every day. Both are former full-time drivers, one of them a mother who does not wish to work during school holidays. Recruitment in Surrey is more difficult and only two specific drivers had been trained to run the services by the first week; at the start of the operation, established drivers were being brought over from Bracknell to cover the work.

First hopes to persuade parents that its safety is better than that of 125 cars making the Yorkshire school run twice a day, thus eliminating up to 45,000 car journeys per year. Both of the Runnymede schools have over 1,000 pupils in an area of limited local bus services and First hopes to eliminate 180,000 peak hour traffic trips a year.

In both schemes, each child is allocated a numbered seat. By the launch day, 125 pupils

had already been signed up for the Yorkshire services. All were sold discounted travel passes, issued with a yellow Filofax outlining rules and regulations of behaviour, and parents have been made aware of their responsibilities.

The Runnymede passengers pay £1 each per day to travel, with all administration undertaken by the schools. Parents are invited to phone a central control if there is a delay or to report the fact that their child is not travelling that day. Beeline's drivers are issued with a passenger list for each of the fixed stops along the route. Unlike the American model, buses do not provide door-to-door transport, though no passenger should have more than 300m walk to a stop. In an attempt to protect the fragile local service network, pupils who travel by ordinary bus services are not eligible to travel on the school buses.

Local radio station Kiss FM is played during the journeys in an attempt to create a convivial atmosphere. Services are provided commercially with backing from the borough council in partnership with local businesses, though initial take-up is fairly low on the Fullbrook routes — and fewer than half the students booked to travel turned up for our first trips.

Both routes test the manoeuvrability of the Blue Birds, which are designed for straight, wide American roads. The Calderline routes include the right turn from the A646 to Heptonstall, which is only possible by using a



Top: First Beeline Blue Bird YS51 JVE arrives at Fullbrook School, New Haw on its first day in service, 25 February. STEPHEN MORRIS

Above: First Calderline S001 (YS51 JVA) and YS51 JVK (possibly numbered S002) alongside a more typical bus in the fleet, Volvo B10B/Alexander Strider 1002 (K102 HUM). ANDREW JAROSZ



turning circle half-a-mile beyond the junction to enable the bus to return to the junction and make a left turn. The Beeline buses have to perform two reverses inside the Fullbrook school site as pupils arrive.

WHAT MAKES THOSE BLUE BIRDS FLY?

First's 20 Blue Bird All-American REs (it has an option to buy another 80) were built in Fort Valley, Georgia. They cost around £75,000 each, including an 18% import duty. That's nearly twice the price of the front-engined Blue Bird TC2000 demonstrator yellow bus that First imported in 2000.

They are 11.4m (37ft 5in) long, 8ft wide and weigh 9,262kg unladen. Power comes from a rear inline six-cylinder Cummins ISBe Euro 3 engine delivering 220hp through an Allison World Series automatic MD3060 five-speed gearbox. Antilock brakes are standard. They have multi-leaf, rather than air suspension.

The all-steel body can withstand a load one-and-a-half times the vehicle's own weight on the roof without deformation or restricting

access to emergency exits. Joints are riveted and welded for strength and the steel floor has reinforcing ribbing. Sixty steel-framed seats, in 3+2 configuration, comply with US standards for compartmentalisation, and UK specification seatbelts have been installed along with a first aid kit and fire extinguishers.

Although they meet UK Construction & Use standards and the requirements for the Certificate of Initial Fitness, derogation has been granted by the DTLR transport department in relation to compliance with Schedule III of the Disability Discrimination Act. This is because they classed as contract vehicles, and no fares are collected on them, so they lack

destination equipment and don't have the statutory seat clearance required above the wheel arches.

They also have a four-step entrance with marked edges, additional yellow handrails and two enormous convex mirrors to enable the driver to see right in front of the bus and along both sides.

Above: Rear view of First Calderline's YS51 JVK, complete with a registration that will remind many of an old Huddersfield mark. ANDY IZATT

Right: Roof level flashing lights, considered an essential safety feature in the US, are illegal in Britain, so are just painted on. ANDY IZATT



EDINBURGH BUS WAR: IT SHOULD ALL BE OVER BY THE SUMMER

First Edinburgh is abandoning its head-to-head competition with Lothian Buses, and plans to withdraw the last two of its copycat routes in mid-July.

The 11 and 22 services were part of a four-strong low fares network built up between August and November last year following the same routes and displaying the same numbers as established Lothian services.

First had already committed itself to withdrawing its other competing services and says it will concentrate in future on serving its traditional markets in the towns and villages surrounding Edinburgh. First Edinburgh general manager

Gordon Dewar says the company's move into the city highlighted Lothian's 'aggressive actions in moving farther into our traditional operating areas', but says: 'We recognise the need to work with the councils towards partnership and integration.'

'The coming months will see us focusing on reinvestment in our traditional operating areas. This has started with a series of customer consultations in East, West and Midlothian to see what customers really want from the services that we offer.'

Lothian hopes to reinstate off-peak services cut last autumn.

■ See 'You Write' p28

EX-MANAGERS HEAT UP LUTON

Two small companies run by former Arriva the Shires & Essex managers are turning up the heat against their former employer with a jointly marketed network of commercial midibus services.

Grant Palmer Passenger Services, which has been running for two years and has held local authority tendered service contracts since last year, has teamed up with Refresh Travel Solutions to provide three services

with the same inMotion fleetname. GPPS, run by former Arriva engineering manager Grant Palmer, will operate two Luton services and Refresh, only recently established by former Essex general manager David Shelley, will operate between St Albans and Kensworth.

Grant Palmer's father, Stuart Palmer, ran secondhand double-deckers in competition with Luton & District (as The Shires & Essex was then known) before selling out in 1994.

Grant Palmer F685 XMS, an Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D new to London Buses as its MA85, in service in Luton last summer. RICHARD GODFREY



CONNEX TO RUN DUBLIN TRAMS

In a foretaste of things to come when Dublin's bus network starts being let by tender, the first five-year contract to operate the Irish capital's three-line Luas tram franchise has been awarded to Connex, against short-listed bids from First and London United Busways' owner, Transdev. A joint bid by state-owned Iarnród Éireann and Dublin Bus was eliminated from the process at an early stage.

METROBUS SEEKS USERS' VIEWS ON DESIGN OF GUIDED BUSES

Go-Ahead's Metrobus subsidiary has been seeking comments on contemporary vehicle designs from potential users of its Fastway guided bus system in Sussex.

It hopes to start operating the Horley-Gatwick-Crawley Fastway system from spring next year, and invited views about the exterior

and interior styling, journey comfort, ease of access, volume of seating and layout of four buses being considered for the network. These were a Scania OmniCity, a Scania L94/Wright Solar, a Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse and a TransBus Enviro 300.

THE SHIRES TEMPTS COMMUTERS WITH GOLDEN ALEROS

Arriva the Shires & Essex is operating two of the first production Optare Alero low-floor minibuses on innovative round-the-clock services in rural Bedfordshire.

It launched the gold/bronze-coloured 14-seaters on the Link-branded services on 18 February, connecting villages with the railway stations and town centres at Sandy and Biggleswade. Both towns are in Stagecoach United Counties territory and there is a Stagecoach garage in Biggleswade; they are on the East Coast Main Line, with stopping trains provided by West Anglia Great Northern,

a National Express operator. Arriva garages the Aleros in Hitchin.

The services are funded from a £500,000 three-year Rural Bus Grant made to Bedfordshire County Council. They operate half-hourly between 06.00 and 01.00, with fares of £1 to and from the two towns or 70p between any of the villages of Dunton, Eyeworth, Wrestlingworth, Cockayne Hatley, Sutton, Potton and Everton.

YS51 HDN, one of the Optare Alero 14-seaters that Arriva the Shires & Essex is operating on the Link services, arriving in Biggleswade town centre. KEVIN LANE



STOKE BUYS A BETTER BUS SERVICE

Stoke on Trent City Council has become one of the first English local authorities to use part of its Local Transport Plan settlement to purchase vehicles for use on existing subsidised services. Three Cityrider-branded Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts — bought with £250,000 from the LTP settlement — are providing five Monday to Saturday daytime services, two from Hanley and three from Tunstall.

Although the council owns them, the buses are being operated by D&G Coach & Bus, of Longton, on a five-year contract, with a team of drivers trained to meet the needs of disabled and elderly passengers. The MPDs' livery combines the council's corporate red with D&G's French blue.

29 (DA51 XTC), one of the three Cityrider Dart MPDs operated by D&G. They are the first vehicles in North Staffs to have new-style registrations. CLIFF BEETON



FLAT FARE FOR CHESTER

Chester City Transport has followed Brighton & Hove's lead by replacing eight fares of up to £1.35p with a flat £1 single and £1.50 return fare for the whole of the city, plus a 50p short hop fare.

The flat fare experiment is part of CCT's contribution to Cheshire County Council's smartcard scheme. Magnetic card reading equipment has been installed in all its buses, and stored value tickets can be used, with passengers gaining a 10% bonus of travel each time they spend £10 using the cards. Arriva and First are expected to join the scheme during the summer, enabling passengers to use all three operators' services in the city.

KEIGHLEY IS BACK IN BUSINESS

West Yorkshire PTE's 15-year bus station refurbishment programme was completed in February, when Keighley bus station re-opened after a nine month £3 million rebuild that replaced the previous island building and layout with 15 drive-in stands.

Day-to-day management of the station remains with Blazefield's Keighley & District subsidiary, which lost its offices, staff facilities and travel shop in the rebuilding, and has relocated to a former bank in nearby Cavendish House across the road from the facility, which had formerly served as a bank. The company believes it lost about 5% of its passengers (mainly short distance riders) while the station was being rebuilt.

DIARY DATES

26 March

Omnibus Society (national meeting). Prof. Peter White, University of Westminster on 'Future options for the bus and coach industry'. 18.45, London Underground headquarters, 55 Broadway, London SW1 (next to St James's Park Underground station).

11 April

Buses Worldwide. Lyndon Rowe on south-east Asia and Australasia in the 1970s. 18.30, Fred Tallant Hall, Euston, London.

11/12 April

26th Nottingham Transport Conference & Exhibition. 'Delivering the transport renaissance — locally'. University of Nottingham. Details (including free places for delegates and students aged 28 and under) from 01223 881622.

BLACK PRINCE REVIVES LEEDS LIVERY

Black Prince Buses has revived the two-tone green Leeds City Transport livery and fleetname for its Leeds Suburban Buses operation, 28 years after LCT merged into West Yorkshire PTE.

The Morley-based company has registered Leeds City Transport as a subsidiary to operate cross-Leeds services provided previously by Leeds Suburban

vehicles in the former Newport colours of green and cream. Black Prince already operates blue double deckers on its Bradford service.

The first of four former Newport Scania N112 double deckers has been painted in the reversed former 'one-person operation' Leeds livery.



Corporation livery has returned on Leeds Suburban Scania N112DH/East Lancs 32 (C32 ETG). A reversed double-decker takes the place of the customary sheep on the amended coat of arms. S. R. PROCTER/ANDREW JAROSZ



REGISTRATION NOTES

by David J. Stanier

As reported in 'Fleet News' this month and last, registrations with the numerals '02' have started to appear, to cover the period through to 31 August. In recent weeks, the local offices have used at least some of the double letter combinations available to them with the '51' age identifier. I have noted London (Stanmore) LL and Yorkshire (Beverley) YY.

BUS PEOPLE

For the first time ever, First's UK bus business will have a full-time director of engineering when **Alan Parker** joins the group in May. He currently holds a similar post with truck operator TNT UK (owned by the privatised Dutch postal service). **Garry Raven**, First's divisional director north west, who is currently also the UK bus engineering director, will return to the full time role of divisional director.

Arriva London commercial manager **John Trayner** has succeeded **Robin Young** as operations director at Go-Ahead's main London companies, London Central and London General.

First Western National operations director **Brian James** has become general manager at Truronian, the Truro-based company owned by former Western National colleagues David Rabey and Geoff and Alison Rumbles.

With regret, we report the recent death of **James Meffan**, founder of the Kirriemuir, Angus-based bus and road haulage business acquired by Traction Group in 1993. He was 95 and maintained a strong interest in running the business until 10 years ago.



For 2002 - the LOTS monthly newsletter contains

- colour photographs
- the central London and the former London Country area news
- all the news on the **routes** or the **vehicles** for the former LT area
- all in **ONE** newsletter

and as always is the **quickest** way to keep London enthusiasts up-to-date with the ever changing London bus scene.

Also, why not visit our re-vamped web site at —
<http://www.lots.org.uk>

The following **NEW** publications are now available from **LOTS**:

- **London Bus Magazine** (no 119) features an article entitled *Modern Workhorses — the MCW Metrobus* as well as the usual Around & About quarterly review — £4.50 (£3.50 to members)
- **TLB Extra 1972** - TLB style Vehicle News for this the year when the first minibuses arrived, the FS class, the AF, AN classes and the first Leyland Nationals were delivered, and an ST returned to service; 78 pages, with illustrations — £5.50 (£4.50 to members).

For more details of the benefits of membership of **Britain's largest bus enthusiast society**, or our latest sales list, why not check out the web site or alternatively send a large stamp addressed envelope to:

Postal Sales or Membership Secretary, (as applicable)
London Omnibus Traction Society,
Unit 8, Battersea Business Centre,
103-109 Lavender Hill, London SW11 5QF



TM Travel of Old Tupton has been awarded the contract for new Derbyshire County Council OrbitalLink-branded circular route 33. It links the environs of Chesterfield with two hospitals and a hospice and started on 11 February, using two 29-seat Optare Solos purchased secondhand from the Mistral hire fleet. Y197 KNB shows off its 'big O' vinyls in central Chesterfield. TONY WILSON

Is 19p too much to invest to find your lifetime partner?

By return of post we will send you details, in complete confidence, of people we think could be ideally suited to you!

What sort of people join a dating agency like Dateline? Well actually, it's people just like you!

In fact recent research reveals as many as 1 in 5 unattached men and women turn to dating agencies to start relationships. And the researchers say this figure is set to DOUBLE over the next five years!

Social patterns and trends have simply changed making the age old role of the matchmaker more relevant than ever.

More and more people are joining from all over the country – from villages, market towns and cities. The problems of meeting people are not confined to any particular locality. The backgrounds and occupations of Dateline members are equally varied – GP's, surveyors, solicitors, engineers, surgeons, journalists, teachers, secretaries, stockbrokers, nurses, chemists, receptionists, bus drivers and even zoo keepers. Looking for a partner is not confined to any class or category.

What all Dateline members have in common is a considerate attitude towards meeting new people.

How does Dateline work?

You choose the sort of people you want to meet yourself! After completing a comprehensive questionnaire your information is carefully compiled and the matching process, in which your data is compared with that of every other member begins. The most compatible matches will be found and their details forwarded to you immediately. Your details can likewise show up on matches from other members and they will contact you, and so a whole new social life begins.

Dateline also has a members' helpline open during the day, evenings and at the weekend.

A few documented Dateline experiences.

"a few more letters passed between us and then she phoned me" – "It was a wonderful phone call – absolutely brilliant!"
"I can certainly say that it was the best thing I've ever done!"
A.H. Derby

"when we tell people how we met, they all think it's a great idea! I just wanted to meet a kind and caring person – and I did!"

J.C. Lanes.
"I actually asked Karen to marry me on the third date" – "All my friends at work said I was stupid – until they met Karen of course!"

G.C. Suffolk

What sort of people join Dateline?

■ **Brian** is a 53 year old Air Traffic Controller from Dorset. He enjoys dinner parties and the theatre. Brian describes himself as averagely built and attractive.

■ **Anna** is a 32 year old Medical Secretary from Reading. A slim and attractive non-smoker who enjoys socialising. She likes to listen to classical and operatic music.

■ **Malcolm** is a 44 year old Software Engineer from South London. He describes himself as slim and attractive. He is a non-smoker and enjoys classical music.

■ **Karen**, 47, lives in Chichester and likes eating out and spending time with friends. She also enjoys jazz music and the countryside.

The answer seems to be – people like you!

* Names have been changed for reasons of privacy. Membership restricted to ages 18+ only

Dateline is part of the OneSaturday plc Group of companies

Your Details

Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐

Surname: _____

First Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Tel No: _____

E-mail: _____

Marital Status:

- ☐ Single ☐ Divorced
☐ Widowed ☐ Separated

Age: _____

Height: _____

Occupation _____

Religion: _____

Build:

- ☐ Slight
☐ Medium
☐ Large

Attractiveness:

- ☐ V. Attractive
☐ Attractive
☐ Average

Your Personality

tick which traits closely describe you

- ☐ Affectionate ☐ Fashionable
☐ Serious ☐ Practical
☐ Considerate ☐ Conventional
☐ Shy ☐ Reliable
☐ Romantic ☐ Adventurous

Your interests

Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no pref.

- ☐ Wining/Dining ☐ Jazz/Folk music
☐ Pubs ☐ Classical music
☐ Sports/Keep fit ☐ Theatre/Arts
☐ Politics/History ☐ Watching TV
☐ Reading ☐ Smoking
☐ Travelling ☐ Mixing with friends
☐ Science/Tech ☐ Children
☐ Cinema ☐ Homemaking
☐ Pets/Animals ☐ Gardening
☐ Pop music ☐ Countryside

Your Attitudes

tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank if you don't feel strongly

- ☐ I prefer town life
☐ I involve myself in community activities
☐ I have many friends of my own sex
☐ I am interested in current affairs
☐ I am looking for one special relationship
☐ I like team activities
☐ My work makes it difficult to meet new people
☐ I want to extend my social life as well as finding a special relationship

Your Ideal Partner

Min. age: _____

Max. age: _____

Height: min. _____

max. _____

☐ Don't mind

Marital Status:

- ☐ Single ☐ Divorced
☐ Widowed ☐ Separated
☐ Don't mind

Build:

Attractiveness:

- ☐ Slight ☐ V. Attractive
☐ Medium ☐ Attractive
☐ Large ☐ Average

How to contact us:

Send in your completed details (19p 2nd class, 27p 1st class) above to:

Dateline
St Peter Port
Guernsey GY1 1ZG

or phone our 24hr information number.

You can even click through to our fully interactive website.

As soon as we receive your completed questionnaire from this page, we'll immediately send you the name and description of someone who could be **YOUR ideal partner – absolutely FREE of charge, in complete confidence and with no obligation whatsoever.** So what have you got to lose?

We hope to be able to offer a variety of interesting offers from us and other reputable organisations. However should you not wish us to pass your information to them or to receive these offers, please tick this box. ☐

Dept. Bus 08

Instant free compatibility test on our interactive website
www.dateline.co.uk

or call our 24hr information line on: 0871 871 8711



MADEIRA RESISTS LOW-FLOORS BUT EMBRACES EURO 3

With the move to Euro 3 engine emission controls, bus operators on Madeira are still resisting the Europe-wide conversion to low-floor operation.

The demise of the Volvo B10M — widely respected on the Portuguese island — prompted operators to accelerate their purchase of new vehicles while chassis were still available.

The first Madeiran operator to register Euro 3 buses was the immaculately turned out Empresa de Automóveis do Caniço Lda (EACL) with a pair of Camo Camus-bodied Scania K114s.

Both Sociedade de Automóveis da Madeira (SAM) and Transportadora Rodoviária da Madeira (Rodoeste) bought pairs of Mota-bodied B10Ms as part of their normal renewal last year, but the latter went one better by taking three more with Mota Atomic coachwork as well as two similarly bodied MANs.

It is a similar story at government-owned Horários do Funchal (HF), which has bought

manœuvrable, fully-automatic transmission Camo Camus-bodied Volvo B9M 23-seaters since 1997. Ten entered service in 2001, bringing the total of these unusual three-door buses to 30, but a further 10 are joining them.

Although both SAM and Rodoeste still employ conductors, HF has become the first operator to employ female drivers.

Group associate Autocarros da Camacha (AC) bought four Marcopolo-bodied B10Ms in 2001 for trunk Camacha services and has started cascading older B10M coaches to the Sociedade de Automóveis de São Roque de Faial operation taken over last summer.

São Roque, which has a new parking facility at Santana on the north coast of the island, and Rodoeste are the last operators of centre-entrance UTIC-AECs, with two and one respectively.

■ Vimeca Transportes — the new owner of Stagecoach Portugal ('Global News' August 2001) — is retaining Stagecoach's striped livery and is repainting its newest

buses, Camo-bodied MAN 18.220s, out of the new Stagecoach livery and into the old stripes.

Horários do Funchal
Madeira 178
(54-82-MD), a
Camo Camus-
bodied Volvo B9M
delivered last
year. ANDY IZATT



The end of an era. Former São Roque MA-58-49, a 1977 centre-entrance UTIC-AEC U2075, ekes out its last days as Autocarros da Camacha's 1002 on contract duties at Camacha. ANDY IZATT

NABI BREAKS INTO HUNGARIAN MARKET AS IRISBUS LOBBIES FOR HELP

NABI, Optare's Hungarian-American owner, is preparing to launch left-hand-drive versions of the British-built Excel and Solo low-floor buses in the Hungarian market later this year.

It has already won its first public procurement tender in Hungary, to supply four low-floor buses for the public transport company of Kaposvár, the south-western Hungarian town in which NABI is building a new plant to supply CompoBus composite bodies for completion in the United States.

In the meantime, Irisbus (majority owner of loss-making, Budapest-based Ikarus Bus), says the Hungarian government should provide more financial support to

help the country's public transport undertakings buy more buses. Irisbus chairman Elios Pascual says Ikarus needs orders for between 600 and 700 vehicles a year. Last year, it sold 500.

It will remain in operation even if the government is reluctant to provide funds for the orders, but he warns that cuts would be needed and the company's recovery would take longer without them.

Ikarus and Hungarian engine supplier Raba have teamed up with gas engine manufacturer Deltec and Dutch research organisation TNO to supply compressed natural gas-engined buses in Hungary.

BVG PLACES REPEAT ORDER FOR INTEGRAL VOLVOS

Berliner Verkehrsgesellschaft (BVG), the German capital's publicly owned transport undertaking, has broken Mercedes-Benz and MAN's dominance of Europe's biggest patriotic bus market by ordering 37 integral single-deckers from Volvo.

The low-floor Volvo 7000 buses, combining B7L running units and stainless steel Carrus body technology, will be built at Volvo's Polish plant at Wroclaw and are expected to arrive in Berlin in June. The order follows the recent purchase of 12 secondhand Volvo B10Ls from the Pinneberg undertaking ('Global News' February) and an earlier B10L trial order for 30. BVG has also ordered four Polish-built Solaris Urbanos, 166 Mercedes-Benz Citaros and six Mercedes Cito midibuses.

News of these orders comes as Volvo has published disappointing figures for 2001, showing its bus activities turned a £27.7 million operating profit in 2000 into an operating loss of £33 million. Deliveries were down from 11,015 to 9,953 vehicles.



As we reported last month, the already varied Maltese bus scene has gained further interest in the shape of FBV 768 (B51 XFV), an East Lancs-bodied Dennis Falcon new to Hyndburn Transport and more recently with Pilkington of Accrington. Just as we closed for press, we also received first sightings of the new Scarnif-bodied Volvo B6BLE built as part of the long awaited introduction of new buses to the island; first impressions are that it owes its styling to recent Dutch practice. DAVID JENKINS

RATP TIES UP WITH TRANSDEV AS CONNEX REACHES ISRAEL

Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens (RATP), the transport authority for Paris, has acquired a 49% stake in French public transport giant Transdev.

The deal, due to be completed by 30 April, also sees Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (C3D) — Transdev's parent company — take a 25% stake in RATP's operating subsidiaries RATP France and RATP International.

Transdev, which owns London United Busways and has an 18% stake in Nottingham City Transport, says: 'This partnership creates the possibility for the two groups to play a first line role in France and in Europe, on a market which is rapidly opening up to competition.'

It occurs against growing pressure from the European Parliament for monopoly operators like RATP to be prevented from providing services outside their protected areas. And it comes as bids are invited for the contract to operate buses, trams and driverless metro trains in the northern

French city of Lille from the start of next year; the current contract is held by Kéolis, the SNCF (French railways) subsidiary.

■ Connex, the largest French public transport company, has increased its international operations by winning a six-year contract in Israel to take over 96 buses to operate the urban network in Tiberias network and intercity connections between Tel Aviv and Ashdod, about 30 km south of Tel Aviv.

This is part of the privatisation of the 6,000-vehicle Israeli bus industry.

Connex BBA, the group's Dutch subsidiary, has also won 30 additional buses' worth of work in the Veghel region to the east of Brabant province. It has been operating the intercity network of the Brabant region as well as the urban networks of Breda, Tilburg, 's-Hertogenbosch and Eindhoven since early July last year and took over the Maastricht bus network on 1 November.

ORION DEMONSTRATES MkVII

Orion Bus Industries, DaimlerChrysler's Canadian-based bus manufacturing subsidiary, has begun demonstrating its new MkVII model to United States transit agencies.

This 40ft, compressed natural gas-powered low-entry demonstrator was shown to Sacramento Regional Transit in February, but was not placed in service. The new model appears to have a transverse rear engine (probably a Detroit Diesel Series-50), whereas the low-entry Orion MkVI has an in-line engine on the American offside — as on the Volvo B7L. Sacramento has a large fleet of CNG-fuelled Orion MkV step-entrance buses.

Picture by MICHAEL DRYHURST



TROLLEYS GO, TROLLEYS COME

The 10-vehicle trolleybus system in the northern Italian town of Cremona was due to cease operating in February. Overhead on the system — opened in December 1940 — was renewed in recent years and the fleet included two Breda trolleys new in 1999.

There is better news from Switzerland, where Fribourg has ordered nine MAN/Hess duo-buses for delivery in autumn next year, and where plans have been agreed to convert another route to full trolleybus operation.

NATEX QUILTS MAINLAND EUROPE

The National Express Group has sold its only mainland European bus company.

Buses Worldwide reports that it has sold Autobusbedrijf Bronckers — a contractor running about 100 buses on behalf of the De Lijn network — to Eurobus Holding, a company owned by the Walloon regional government. This leaves Arriva as the only UK bus group still with European businesses, and follows NatEx's earlier disposal of its stake in Norwegian-owned Concordia Bus.

■ TEC, the main operator in French-speaking Belgium, has acquired around 40 secondhand German, Dutch, Swiss and French buses to help it provide additional services.

BUSES EARN OLYMPIAN PRAISE

Transport at the Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City was provided by over 700 buses, 29 trams and 1,100 holidaying drivers, mechanics and managers lent by 64 communities in 28 states across the United States.

New York, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle were among the largest cities to lend vehicles, while others came from Honolulu in Hawaii, and Dallas, Texas lent 29 trams to more than double the Salt Lake City fleet for the duration of the games. Together they helped cater for the needs of an estimated 1.7 million visitors and competitors.

'Investing in public transportation helped Salt Lake City to be selected as host of the 2002 Winter Olympics, said John English, head of the Utah Transit Authority. American Public Transportation Association President William W. Millar said: 'Good transit is good business and a great way to bring communities together for

the Olympics and other major sporting events. Public transit ridership is at its highest level in 40 years and is particularly effective in moving large numbers of people to and from sporting events and stadiums.'

Writing in the Californian newspaper *The Sacramento Bee*, columnist Daniel Weintraub commented early into the games: 'We've already seen much to remember in four days at the 2002 Winter Games . . . but so far the dominant memory might well be the buses. Without them, we could not have seen anything else.'

While the Olympic Committee had apparently predicted traffic jams, he said the buses prevented this from happening. 'If this is not the greatest mobilisation of public transportation the western United States has ever witnessed, it must be close. It shows what Americans can do, at least for a short period, when we have no choice but to leave our cars at home.'

JELZC IN KALININGRAD DEAL

The Polish Zasada Group has revealed plans to assemble its Jelzc buses in Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave bordering Poland and Lithuania, from later this year.

It has signed an agreement with the Russian company Avtotor, already involved in assembly projects with BMW and Kia, with an initial investment of US\$40 million planned to grow to US\$100 million once the plant is fully operational at its planned capacity of 1,000 buses per year.

Zasada will supply chassis components while the bodies will be produced in Kaliningrad with local materials and parts. The group already sells 200 Autosan buses per year to Russian municipalities.



Connexxion, the Dutch state-owned operator, has begun services on the first 24km section of the Zuidtangent high-speed busway linking Haarlem and Amsterdam-Bijlmer railway stations with Schiphol airport and the Floriade theme park at Vijfhuizen. Brand new DAF-powered Van Hool AG300 47-seat artics are being used, 29 of which are in this dedicated livery. ANDREW JAROSZ

IN LONDON

SETBACK FOR THREE OF MAYOR'S KEY POLICY OBJECTIVES

The Greater London Assembly has denied Mayor Ken Livingstone the funds he wanted for three of his plans to increase the attractiveness of London's bus services.

His ambitious scheme for more policing and traffic wardens on 25 key London routes (*Buses* last month) unfortunately bit the dust. So did his proposals to reduce the £1 central London flat fare to the 70p charged in all other zones, and to employ more bus conductors. While cost was probably the main factor behind the politicians' rejection of the fares reduction, some bus drivers were also concerned that boarding times would have been reduced by the need to give

change to more passengers. My own feeling is that, rather than lower a fare that most are used to paying, the money would be better spent on yet more service improvements.

After all, bus users on low incomes, or who are plain hard up, can buy a pack of six Saver tickets for £3.90 — a saving of 35p per trip in Zone 1. There also are other passes, including the £2 all-day Bus Pass.

That leaves visitors representing a fair proportion of casual users paying the £1 fare, and they do not pay council tax to support London's public transport. Compared with fares in most large European cities, £1 is not excessive.

Rejection of the plan for more conductors seems likely to leave just the 55 (Oxford Circus-Leyton) with its new low-floor double-deckers continuing with conductors. I hear that first studies on this route show no clear conclusions other than the fact that passengers like having conductors.

More attention still needs to be paid to getting Routemaster conductors to do their job. On a recent evening peak-hour journey on a 73 to Victoria, the conductor was good with the passengers, answering queries from strangers, remembering the stops they had asked for and calling them just before they were reached. But absolutely no attempt was made

to check passes or ask for fares and not a single ticket was issued in more than the 30min I was on the bus.

I think a case could be made for insisting on conductors remaining on the platform when the bus is in Oxford Street, where congestion is rife and the temptation is irresistible for the inexperienced to try to board between stops just as the bus moves on. But the widespread lack of checking or ticket issuing is a nonsense. And if a conductor consistently pays in only a few pounds at the end of a shift, surely somebody should notice. Or is that not in the contract?

ARE LONDON OPERATORS WARNING TRANSBUS?

John Simpson, chief executive of the Mayflower engineering group, which owns a controlling 70% of TransBus International, is looking forward to good financial results as London's bus companies order more new double-deckers 'to cope with passengers fed up with the tube'.

I'm sure that's not the full story, but the total number of double-deckers working in London is

likely to rise this year as more replace single-deckers on some routes and frequencies are improved on other routes, all to cope with rising traffic.

Indeed, surprising numbers of buses are on order and many double-deckers will have Plaxton or Alexander bodies. But I wonder if unease about so much of the industry's building capacity ending up with one owner has led to

some orders going elsewhere. In a more dramatic way, when Leyland indicated foolishly that it was not planning to offer its double-deckers for bodying outside the group, MCW-built double-deckers (originally on Scania running units) and Dennis's Dominator came into prominence.

This time, not only is Arriva buying that very nice Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deck in

quantity (as well as Wright-bodied DAF single-deckers), but London United is buying a modest three. Then there is that surprising London General order for 36 East Lancs-bodied Volvo B7TLs, which has since been topped up by a further 16.

Admittedly, both London General and London Central have large numbers of Plaxton President-bodied Volvos and London Central has a further 63 on order. But London General is also buying 27 Eclipse Geminis and sister company Metrobus is continuing to take East Lancs-bodied Dennis Tridents.

Still on the horizon, but nonetheless an additional potential threat to TransBus, is Optare's projected double-decker with a modern version of the AEC Q Type's side engine layout and a better lower deck arrangement than any present low-floor bus.



Left: The first of London United's three Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs, VR226 (BD51 YCR), on its first day in service, at Fulwell on 1 March. One of these buses is expected to be among the 50 London double-deckers painted in golden jubilee livery. We assume that the 'R' in the VR type prefix is the wrong way to abbreviate Wright.

GEOFF RIXON

NIGHT BUS BIAS? WHAT NIGHT BUS BIAS?

As Philip Wallis's feature on p18 makes clear, night buses are a big success story for Transport for London, which reports a 16% increase in ridership over the past year. And I've just had news of three further developments in the pipeline.

Starting 22 February, Hammersmith bus station in west London was the first outside the central area to open round the clock. And in the south-east, a £12 million improvement package will include the N35 (Clapham Junction-Tottenham Court Road) being doubled in frequency to half-hourly from late-April and the launch of new half-hourly N345 (South Kensington Station-Peckham).

However, this may not be enough to satisfy Andrew Pelling, the Greater London Authority member for

Croydon and Sutton. He claims that a north-south rift (of the River Thames, by the way) is emerging with London's northern boroughs having an average of 6.4 night buses, against 3.2 in the south.

I can think of several possible prejudices among bus route planners but this wouldn't be one of them. Could the real reason be that the potential traffic is thought to be less? Remember, too, that Croydon and Purley have an hourly all-night train service, something that's not available on any other London railway line.

Meanwhile, Mr Pelling might like to ride on the last journey on day route 413 (Morden-Sutton), a journey that arrives at its final destination at about 01.00. It usually carries no passengers at all.

NO BELLS ON MITCHAM BELLE, JUST A SPEAKING BELLE

The transitional half-red/half-blue livery of Mitcham Belle's Caetano Nimbus-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs is only one of the striking features of these new buses on recently won route 152 (New Malden-Pollards Hill). Another is that they speak to you.

Instead of the usual bleeping before the exit doors are shut, a woman's recorded voice warns you to 'stand clear of the doors' before the doors open and before they close. In addition, the bell push activates a high pitched sound, presumably to confirm that you have pressed it hard enough. On a recent journey, the noise clearly took several passengers by surprise and one thought it was her mobile phone. But it did not stop several passengers from pressing the bell for the same stop.

The Nimbus bodies have a smaller 'Bus Stopping' sign than you find inside other single-deckers and passengers sitting at

the rear will probably need binoculars rather than spectacles to be able to see it.

Rather than a speaking 'conductress', many of Metroline's buses have one of the simplest and neatest ideas to keep passengers away from doors before they open. A yellow strap is attached to one edge of the door and, via a reel, to the bulkhead at the other, so that it forms a barrier at about 45deg between bulkhead and doors when the doors are closed. As the door opens, it rolls up on its reel and there is no obstruction to the exit.

The requirement for all London buses to be painted red seems to have caught Mitcham Belle in mid delivery of its Caetano Nimbus-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs. These views taken in New Malden show KM51 BFL in the operator's own livery (and side destination for a short working to Colliers Wood) and 056 (KM51 BFX) with the lower side panels repainted red. GEOFF RIXON

RUSTIC CHARM IN FORMER MIDDLESEX

The idyllic view of rural bus operation is of an infrequent but reliable service on which the driver knows all the passengers (and *vice versa*), greets them all and waits for Mrs So-and-so who always gets this bus on a Thursday. That driver will know exactly where to stop for them on the return journey and will probably leave the cab to help them off with their shopping.

Surprisingly, such a service operates less than 20 miles from central London. On several days each week, the Anglian Bus Company works a one journey each way Surrey County Council-contracted route 570/571 around

Staines and Uxbridge. The Dennis Dart/Plaxton and its driver also work Sunbury and Staines routes 572/574 on one or more other days and no doubt most of their regulars are also recognised.

On one recent occasion, an elderly lady, who had ridden into Staines, did not appear back at the bus station in time. A passenger went off on an unsuccessful search, so the driver made a quick sortie, returning triumphantly with said lady and her shopping. Only then did the bus leave.

Incidentally, despite its name and a headquarters listed as Sudbury, Suffolk, Anglian has a base at Lower Halliford, near Sunbury.



Connex Bus is replacing its former Travel London Optare Solos with 12 new examples of the same model. S247 (YT51 EBD) negotiates typically heavy Earls Court traffic on 19 February. LEE WHITEHEAD

MILLAR'S TALES

THE EDITOR'S SIDEWAYS LOOK AT BUS AND COACH EVENTS

Whatever happened to...? Appleby's of Conisholme...

A year ago, we reported on the beginning of the end of Appleby's of Conisholme, one of the higher profile firms to run into trouble.

Appleby's had spread beyond its native Lincolnshire into Hull, Bridlington and Scarborough, but two early warnings had already signalled that all was not well at this 88-year-old business. In 2000, the company's vehicle authorisation was cut and it was ordered to cease running local bus services and school contracts in Scarborough. Its 10 travel agencies and 14 of its coaches were sold to Bowen's of Birmingham the following November.

When administrator Robson Rhodes was appointed on 12 February last year, Appleby's, its Halcyon Leisure and North

Bank Travel (Fleetjet) subsidiaries still had 130 vehicles. They were sold in three chunks. First to go were the Halcyon and North Bank operations in Hull, sold to Alpha Coaches in June along with about 40 vehicles. A further 40 vehicles of business around Lincoln was sold to the South Yorkshire operator, MASS Transit of North Anston, on 30 September.

And as we reported in brief last month's 'News' section, Amvale of Kirton Lindsey acquired the remainder — operating from bases in Lincolnshire at Grimsby and North Somercotes — during January. This involved about two dozen operational vehicles (including the unique ECW-bodied rear-engined Leyland Tiger) used on local routes, school contracts and private hires; additionally, several non-runners went to Kirton Bus & Coach Dismantlers, an Amvale subsidiary.

Among the non-runners acquired by Amvale was ORA 455W, an East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlantean new to Nottingham, and Bedford YNT/Plaxton Supreme IV UVL 89W.
DAVID LONGBOTTOM



THE WORD ON THE STREET

This month's news about the temporary grounding of Stagecoach's Mercedes-Benz Varios may not surprise the inhabitants of Britain's best-known fictional street.

That's because, several weeks before a Vario delivered a passenger right into her own front garden in Hyde, the older minibus that regularly carries characters in

and out of the set of Granada Television's *Coronation Street* appeared (in service) with its own health warning. Said warning was on a notice visible to eagle-eyed viewers who can also tell that the soap's new title sequences showing a Metrolink tram have been created digitally. And it said: 'Not to be moved'.

WRITE DIRECT TO MILLAR'S TALES

Please send any stories, photos (prints or slides), cuttings and other information on off-beat bus matters direct to:

Buses
PO Box 3759, Glasgow, G41 5YN

YOUR CHANCE TO WIN ANOTHER CORGI DIECAST



My congratulations — and a 1/50th scale Corgi Original Omnibus Company model — go to Keith Bowler on the Isle of Wight for his highly imaginative winning entry for the February Corgi caption competition. These same women, incidentally, also feature on publicity for the Bradford guided busway.

You've still got until Tuesday 30 April to enter last month's competition — the one with the dog, the policeman and a Travel West Midlands Leyland Lynx.

To win this month's production diecast model — their recommended retail price is around £19.99 — we're looking for your wittiest suggestions of what is going on between Little and Large and an East Yorkshire President.

Answers — and you're free to submit more than one suggestion — may be short or long, captions, headlines or talk bubbles.

Entries, please, by post, fax or e-mail (alan@millar1.demon.co.uk) to arrive at the Buses editorial office in Glasgow by Friday 31 May. If you communicate by e-mail, please don't forget to include your postal address, so we can send on the model to the winner, whose name will be announced in June Buses.

For further information on Corgi, visit the website at www.corgiclassics.com, or for details of your nearest stockist call Corgi customer services on 0845 603 9070

First
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bus service CHANGES

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BBC1 7.45 BUS SERVICE CHANGES

Carol Smillie and Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen set to work helping two equally smiley Glaswegians create a floral/chintz/pastel look on the 41 to Easterhouse. Sequel to last year's acclaimed 'Room and Kitchen' in which the team brought baronial charm to a centre-entrance tramcar dating back to 1898.



NOT SO AMERICAN AFTER ALL . . .

Our old friend Michael Dryhurst may live thousands of miles away on America's west coast where pavements are sidewalks, aerial cable cars are trams and trams are trolleys, but he still knows what is and isn't American.



So he couldn't resist passing on these two pictures of parts of a Californian yellow school bus. As he says, the badge may proclaim patriotically that this is an All-American bus and indeed it may be built and operated in the United States. But Blue Bird is owned by Henlys (headquarters Borehamwood, Herts — not Hertford, North Carolina) and First Student is part of First (headquarters Aberdeen, Scotland — not Aberdeen, Maryland . . . Idaho, Missouri, North Carolina, South Dakota or Washington).



. . . BUT BEAT THIS ONE, MICHAEL

Another American-based reader, Wayne Doran, was so amazed

to see Michael Dryhurst's picture in February 'Fleet News Ireland' of the Dublin Bus Olympian that's disguised as a lottery winner's stretched limo that he dug out this 1997 picture of a Greyhound MCI Model MC12 in Cincinnati. There are six wheels on this wagon, so it's down to Michael — or any one of you out there — to find a similar decoration with even more tyres to its name.

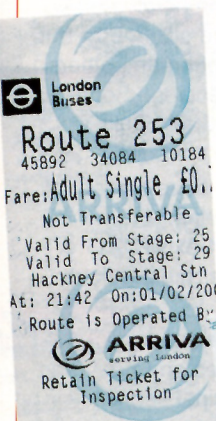


ARRIVA'S AMBITIOUS CROSS-MARKETING

I suspect Mrs M might book me in for deep psychotherapy if I took to reading the backs of bus tickets on a regular basis, but perhaps I'd miss out on some fascinating information. Like the revelation that one big group may be taking national branding to new extremes.

Joseph Ostrin, who confesses to having no particular interest in buses but has a friend who reads us avidly, was issued with this ticket on an Arriva London 253 a few weeks ago. The front matches perfectly with what you would expect on one of London's busiest routes. But its references to north and east London contrast with the back, which advertises Arriva's north west England operations.

I've already featured examples in 'Tales' of surplus Wayfarer tickets being cascaded to big group subsidiaries still able to use them, but this is less explicable — unless Arriva really does want to encourage Londoners to holiday in New Brighton.



Quality bus services - locally and throughout the UK.

7 days £9.99	7 days £9.99
Unlimited travel on ARRIVA North West and ARRIVA Merseyside bus services.	Unlimited travel on ARRIVA North West and ARRIVA Merseyside bus services.
BEST TICKET	BEST TICKET
Buy it from the driver	Buy it from the driver

Please retain your ticket for inspection. Issued subject to conditions, available at company offices

April 2002

STEAM INTO REALISTIC MODELLING

My colleague John Lidstone knows more about 1/50th scale diecast models than many of us. As the pictures that accompany his regular reviews of new products can testify, he also is a stickler for realism — whether it's by posing vehicles to look as if they are 50/50th scale on proper roads or insisting that manufacturers represent the detail down to the last working dipstick.

So I wasn't surprised when he rang breathlessly the other day with news of a development to help create artificial dirty oil marks, body movement streaks or patches of rust.

This life changing accessory is the Crigo Model Boiler, which comprises a tiny heater unit (powered by four AA batteries) that sits under the seats, and is linked to an equally small water header tank and vent pipe under the bonnet. You have to drill a 0.5mm hole in the radiator cap, but it's easy enough as these are usually plastic.

The tank is filled from underneath with the funnel supplied. Pop in your batteries and switch on — and your model's radiator will soon boil over for real.

Once the boiler beds in, it creates its own unique rusty radiator on every model. The simple beauty is that you can have multiple boil-ups to get a really messy effect, or

wipe it clean each time and start all over again. You can also film or photograph your model outside on a cold day, shrouded in its own miniature cloud of steam.

With practice, briskly rolling the model forwards just as it comes to the boil will greatly enhance the after effects, as you can get splashes to streak down the bonnet and even on to the front bulkhead windows.

John has sent me this photo of a 'showman' AEC Regal coach with the Crigo boiler fitted. He got a little distracted while calling me and after an anguished cry of 'Ouch!' he explained that users must take care to avoid scalding, so read the instructions carefully and stand well back.

If you want to know more about this life changing development, John has arranged for Crigo's design director to answer readers' enquiries exclusively by e-mail. You'll need to address your enquiry to 'L. Fairloop — Crigo Boiler Enquiry', and your enquiry must be received between 09.00 and 12.00 on 1 April at fleetnews@lineone.net.

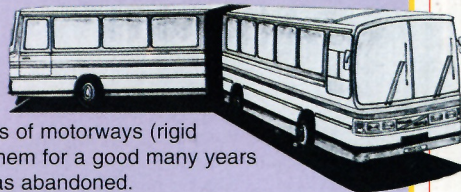


20 YEARS AGO

Our April 1982 issue contained this artist's impression of what was going to be the UK's first articulated coach. As we reported in the previous month's issue, Park's of Hamilton had ordered two Volvo B10MAs with Duple bodies based on the then current Goldliner high floor design. They were to be operated on Park's Glasgow-London service (one of the surviving links provided initially under the ill-fated British Coachways banner) and we reported that 'an initial production run' was planned for the mid-summer of 1982.

In his March report on developments at Duple's Blackpool plant, editor Stephen Morris reported that the company 'does not foresee much difficulty' in production of the artics.

They were not to be. Before Duple got around to building them, the government slapped a ban on using articulated coaches in the outside lanes of motorways (rigid coaches were able to use them for a good many years to come) and the project was abandoned.



BEYOND THE WITC

The UK capital's night bus network has expanded to the extent that, following recent route and schedule improvements, 484 buses are allocated to night services on Friday nights/Saturday mornings and Saturday nights/Sunday mornings — the busiest nights of the week. And that only reduces to 373 buses on the other five nights of the week.

In the past year alone, patronage has increased by 16% and London Buses increased the frequency of service N91 (Trafalgar Square-Cockfosters) — operated by First Capital — from half-hourly to every 20min at weekends from 2 February, with new buses expected to be phased in during the spring.

It was not always thus. From the formation of London Transport in 1933, night bus, trolleybus and tram routes were developed primarily to cater for London's night workers. Many routes focused on the Fleet Street and Holborn areas for the benefit of newspaper workers. Certain others were essentially LT staff bus runs, which had been made public.

And while there is nothing particularly new about the populace's tendency to socialise on Friday and Saturday nights, the great majority of night routes did not operate at all on Saturday nights/Sunday mornings. By 1983, 50 years after its formation, LT needed just 57 buses to maintain its then existing

night bus network. In 1980, London Transport recognised that it needed to reorganise its night bus network. It brought in the Transport Studies Unit of Oxford University to investigate and make recommendations for improvements.

As a result of what was dubbed the Oxford Report, along with its own overview of that report, LT grasped the nettle and improved its night bus network. It increased the use of one-person operated buses; introduced a Saturday night/Sunday morning service to all routes from 28 October 1983; adopted Trafalgar Square as a focal point for routes serving central London; did away with infrequent and irregular, hard-to-remember headways and replaced them with regular 'clockface' headways; and extended the network to suburban areas not previously served.

From the night of 13/14 April 1984, 14 new night bus routes were introduced and almost all existing routes were recast. Although modest in scale compared with present day operations — many routes ran only hourly in 1984 — the foundations were laid for today's network.

Core period of operation

All 73 tendered night bus routes, which range in route numbers from N1 to N381, operate seven nights a week. The core period of operation is from 00.30 until 05.30 (the interval when daytime buses and the Underground system stop) although some begin at around midnight and continue until around 07.00 hours.

No fewer than 59 of these routes serve central London. On 29 April 2000 the terminals of seven routes were removed from Trafalgar Square to Holborn, Oxford Circus or Tottenham Court Road on the perimeter of the West End. Yet others were diverted away from Charing Cross Road and Piccadilly Circus. This was a part of a joint effort by London Bus Services and the Metropolitan Police to alleviate severe night time disruption to traffic in parts of the West End.

In the past London Transport's N-prefixed routes bore no relation to daytime routes bearing the same number. More recently new night bus

route contracts, associated with deliberate numbering of night bus routes, have brought all but five night bus routes broadly into line numerically with daytime routes.

Exceptions remain the N5, N20, N50, N81 and N97, which have no relationship to non-prefixed daytime routes of equivalent numbers. Many night routes are projected beyond the daytime terminal of equivalently numbered routes. In some cases, night bus routes also follow a different routing through central London to their daytime counterparts.

In recent years, tendering has resulted in the same operator running most of the day and night versions of the same services. Currently only two night routes remain operated by a different company from the routes' daytime equivalent. These are the 10/N10 (Metroline/London United respectively) and the 11/N11 (London General/London United respectively).

Night routes operate to a faster schedule than their daytime equivalents, as traffic conditions are generally easier than in daytime. That occasionally isn't the case in parts of the West End. Speed of operation is also maintained through a long established policy of regarding all bus stops as request stops. An intending passenger has to hail an approaching night bus, while alighting passengers must ring the bell to warn the driver to stop.

A simple two-tier fare scale — £1.50p for any journey within, to or from Central London and £1 for any journey in outer London — helps reduce boarding times. Many night routes have end-to-end journey times of around one hour. Frequencies vary. A few are still hourly, but recent tendering has brought many others up to at least 30min frequencies. Some routes are more frequent, with 15min headways becoming more common.

An emerging trend is the development of outer London night bus routes. From 29 September last year, 14 existed, 11 of which were introduced over the previous 12 months.

London Central also operates two commercial night bus routes on Friday and Saturday nights. The principal service comprises route N80 (Trafalgar Square-



Left: Stagecoach's Alexander bodied Dennis Trident TA359 working London Night bus route N15 (Paddington- Romford Market) loads in Duncannon Street at Trafalgar Square.
PHILIP WALLIS

Gravesend), one journey of which is projected through the Medway Towns to Gillingham as route N82. Unfortunately, this operator's commercial night bus route N60 to Watford was withdrawn after operation on 27 January 2001.

London Bus Services seems intent on expanding the night bus network. Recent tenders indicate the introduction of more outer London routes in line with its policy of giving a 24hr 'seamless' service over selected corridors. The Mayor, Ken

Livingstone, is committed to delivering a more attractive and affordable public transport system. This pledge was backed up on 19 November 2000 by the extension of validity of One-Day tickets (including the popular Travelcard) to cover night routes.

NIGHT HOUR

PHILIP WALLIS describes the recent explosive growth in London's night bus services

To use the old fairground adage, it would seem that everyone's a winner when it comes to assessing the future prospects of London's night bus network. Through marginal costing, operators should be able to offer competitive tender prices to London Bus Services which, in turn, can be expected to extend the network to the benefit of passengers who will continue to be offered bargain fares.

No extra buses

Operators do not have to increase their fleet size to work night routes, instead using vehicles already employed on daytime services. While drivers' wages, fuel and maintenance are increased by the use of buses for 24 hours a day, indirect costs are only marginally increased since hefty capital, finance and depreciation costs have already been borne.

The night network gives operators the opportunity to let their assets — the buses — sweat harder. Another potential saving to operators — possibly achieved already in some measure — is in the reduced use, and hence cost, of garage space. At the present rate of expansion, it is probably reasonable to anticipate that 10% (585 buses) of the current London daytime peak vehicle requirement of 5,849 buses being on the road 24 hours a day before long.

OPERATORS AT 29 SEPTEMBER 2001

Operator	Night bus routes operated	%	Buses allocated Friday-Saturday nights	%
Arriva	14	19.1	111	22.9
Connex Bus	1	1.4	9	1.9
East Thames Buses	1	1.4	3	0.6
First London	13	17.8	96	19.8
Go-Ahead				
(London Central and London General)	15	20.5	93	19.2
London United	7	9.6	45	9.3
Metroline	11	15.1	56	11.6
Sovereign	1	1.4	8	1.7
Stagecoach	10	13.7	63	13.0
Total	73	100.0	484	100.0

The table shows that large corporate group operators dominate current night bus route contracts. Arriva has clearly achieved the best proportional vehicle utilisation reflecting that group's presence on a number of higher frequency routes. Conversely Metroline, with just three fewer routes than Arriva, has half the latter's vehicle utilisation owing to its operation of many less frequent routes.



I am grateful to Ken Glazier and the London Omnibus Transport Society for their assistance in compiling this article.

Top: Arriva London North M1300 (B300 WUL) on one of the diminishing number of MCW Metrobus-operated night services. When photographed loading at Tottenham Court Road station, it was one of 24 buses allocated to the weekend service on route N29. Its 6min frequency makes it the most intensive of all London night routes. PHILIP WALLIS

Left: How London Buses shows the routes followed by the night and day elements of service 36/N36. Both routes are operated by London Central.



THE END OF THREE

When First Manchester held its highly successful Leyland Atlantean running day in Bolton on 11 August last year to mark the impending demise of this once commonplace type, the company still had 43 serviceable examples at that depot alone, plus two at Wigan.

We've become used to the lengthy gaps between farewell running days such as this and the final withdrawal of the vehicles concerned, and this time the gap was of almost five months. The original plan was that they would go in October, but as reported in 'Fleet News' last month, Bolton's last Atlanteans — and the final first generation Greater Manchester 'Standards' — made their last service journeys on 7 January.

The type was confined to Bolton from early September, after 4621/2 were transferred from Wigan, and 38 were running there as late as 23 November; 10 days earlier, one of them (4540) reintroduced the type to Bury for one day on loan to that depot. Their main

activity, as it had been in recent years, was on inter-urban routes — some of them inherited from the original Lancashire United Transport — between Bolton, Leigh and Manchester and on circular services within Bolton itself.

Twenty of the 38 were withdrawn that Friday night, including two celebrities, 4508 (SND 508X) which by then was the oldest survivor, and 4573 (ANA 573Y), which had been repainted in Greater Manchester Transport orange/brown/white with original fleetnumber 8573 for the running day. The GMT repaint had been plagued by gearbox translator panel problems, but the final straw was an act of serious vandalism to its upper deck seats while operating an early evening service on the Withins estate. Another of the buses withdrawn that night, 4667 (A667 HNB), still carried an 'AN' sticker from its days at the now demolished former LUT depot at Atherton.

Replacements were flooding in

Transfers of Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus double-deckers from First Glasgow continued apace, and Bolton was soon also receiving cascaded GMT-style Leyland Olympians from Wigan, Bury and Oldham. Despite the transfer back to Dukinfield of loaned K-registered Olympians borrowed for schools work, the numbers of incoming vehicles effectively meant that Atlanteans could be withdrawn as soon as any defect was discovered.

Overnight there was a marked reduction in their numbers on the streets; they continued to work the long routes into Manchester, but not in the same numbers as before. By

12 December, only a dozen were left and by Christmas Eve, 4626/89 and 4712 were laid up. The type was down to single figures from the 1,231 Atlantean 'Standards' bought by Selnece and GMT from 1971.

On New Year's Eve, 4633 (ANA 633Y) was in the depot, 4563/622 (ANA 563, 622Y) and 4746 (A746 NNA) were operating the 561/562 and 571/572 Bolton-Great Lever/Withins circles, 4645/50 (ANA 645/50Y) were on services 35, 39 and 552/553 (Leigh-Manchester/Bolton) and 4721/46/63 (A721 LNC, A746/63 NNA) were on the 506/507 (Bolton-Harwood circles).

Such was their decline in numbers that there was a three-hour gap in the afternoon between Atlantean appearances in central Manchester and Salford, with 4645

on the 14.39 route 35 from Manchester to Leigh and 4650 on the 17.39 to Atherton. Thus 4650 was the final Atlantean to operate in service in Manchester city centre in 2001, the final full year of their operation.

Even with only nine examples left, there could still be some odd workings, such as the use of 4740 on express route 500 all the way to Manchester Airport on 3 January and of 4650 on Quality Service 575 to Horwich the same day. And 4650 also had the honour of being the last First Manchester Atlantean to reach south Manchester, performing on route 22 between Bolton and Stockport on 4 January. It was noted working the 15.20 departure from Stockport and proudly showing the correct 'via' blind display.



Left: Bury-based 7168 (WWH 26L), a Park Royal-bodied Daimler Fleetline of 1973, in the northern limits of the Greater Manchester conurbation. And, yes, the destination really is as precise as 'Edenfield (Bus Bay)'.
ALAN MILLAR

Below: First Manchester restored 4573 (ANA 573Y) to its original GMT white/orange/brown livery — complete with fleetnumber 8573 — for the Bolton running day last August, but it was withdrawn in November following vandal damage. Here, it leaves Leigh bus station on 13 August, its first day back in normal service.
PAUL HOSKINS



ERAS



As this article explains, the withdrawal of First Manchester's last 'Standard' Atlanteans in January

brought an end to three significant generations of the region's buses



The type also continued to appear on route 94 (Bolton-Manchester via Whitefield), with both 4633 and 4746 in use that day.

Despite the loss of 4563 at the start of January, there was still little warning that the end was less than a week away, even though the run down had been so rapid. The Leyland Fleetlines at Bolton had been down to 17 examples during July 1998, but these dwindled only gradually and it was January 1999 before the last was withdrawn.

Word spread fast

Word spread during the course of Saturday 5 January that this was intended to be the final day of Atlantean operation. All except 4740 ran that day, but 4622 (by then the oldest of the eight survivors) was withdrawn during the day after operating the Bolton-Harwood circles.

While this was indeed to be their final *full* day of service, they defied extinction once again, as permission was given for Atlanteans to be rostered to part-day duties on the following Monday morning. Where they were

allocated to full-day boards, they were to be replaced by other vehicles as soon as possible. The final workings detailed below have been ascertained by cross-checking with observers on the day and with other sources; they are believed to be accurate.

Atlantean 4633 was rostered to operate the 07.30 peak hour express 34 (Leigh-Manchester), while 4645 was noted in Leigh showing '25 Contract' on the blinds and its last scheduled journey was scheduled to be the 07.45 service 34 to Manchester. Following arrival at Cannon Street, both would return empty to Bolton depot and be withdrawn.

Meanwhile, 4650 was used on route 502 during the early morning, but another bus replaced it before it was due to run light for Leigh for the 08.22 service 552 back to Bolton; 4740 was put to work on Harwood circular service 506 but finished its duty in Bolton shortly before 09.00. Both of these were withdrawn upon entering the depot for the last time, joining 4746, which had remained in the depot that morning and was officially withdrawn.

Top: Several surplus Manchester Atlanteans have crossed the Pennines to end their working lives with First Huddersfield. One of these migrants, Huddersfield 6452 (A737 NNA) — ex-4737 — returned to Bolton for the 11 August running day. It shared operation of the bus station-depot shuttle service with preserved Bolton Atlantean PDR1/1/East Lancs 232 (FBN 232C). PAUL HOSKINS

Above: A 1982 view of 'Standard' Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlantean 7587 (KDB 680P) turning from Lever Street into Piccadilly in central Manchester. This Birchfields Road-based AN68A/1R was in the original GMT livery. ALAN MILLAR

Below: The commemorative 'farewell' boards used on the August running day referred to the start of Atlantean operation in Bolton and the projected end of the type. Manchester Corporation's first Atlanteans arrived in 1960.



Below: Some of the Standards sold in the mid-1980s ended up in the fleets of the emerging big groups. **Liverline Atlantean 578 (HNB 37N)** — former 7547 — was owned by British Bus (one of the component parts of Arriva) when photographed in Liverpool in 1995. **ALAN MILLAR**

Bottom: As well as prompting the dispersal of large numbers of Standards to operators throughout Britain, deregulation also led both Greater Manchester operators to use some of them on competitive services on Merseyside. The most colourful of these ventures was undertaken by **GM Buses South** (before Stagecoach took over), when it set up its Birkenhead & District outpost with buses in a livery in the style of Birkenhead Corporation. Northern Counties-bodied **Leyland Fleetline 4107 (HDB 107V)** was heading for New Brighton in April 1995, shortly before this particular bus war ended. **ALAN MILLAR**

Then 4721, rebuilt and refurbished after a serious accident during the 1990s, was employed on service 519 (Bolton-Johnson Fold), carrying a 'farewell' headboard. It relinquished duty after the 10.15 departure from Johnson Fold, retired to the depot and was withdrawn.

The last of all to run in service was 4763, numerically the third last Atlantean delivered to GMT (as 8763) in 1984 and new to Wigan depot. After working the 07.54 short journey on route 37 from Walkden to Bolton, it then operated the 08.35 service 553 to Leigh and set out on its final return trip, the 09.36 service 39 (Leigh-Manchester) and the 10.56 return. By the time it was ready to leave Manchester, all the others had already reached the end of the road. This also was the last visit of one of the company's normal service Atlanteans to Manchester and Salford city centres.

The occasion was captured on film for posterity, but the suddenness and timing of the final run meant that only a couple of enthusiasts — members of the Selnece Preservation Society — travelled on the final run in service. To them, it all seemed rather surreal, just like another Atlantean journey to Leigh, and a reflection of how quickly the final run-down had taken place.

Opportunities for rides like this were commonplace just a

few weeks before, and 4763 gave a good account of itself, being in good condition overall. It reached Leigh's King Street bus station at 12.11, where Adam Stephenson of the GM Buses Group met it. With barely a pause, it was off on its last journey of all, empty to Crook Street depot in Bolton. The Atlantean era had finally come to an end.

Except, that is, for First Manchester 4446, another refurbished example and a driver training vehicle. It was noted in Manchester city centre on New Year's Eve and again on Wednesday 9 January.

There are remarkable similarities between the demise of the company's Atlanteans and Fleetlines. The last Fleetline ran in service on 6 January 1999 and the last Atlantean on 7 January 2002; both last journeys were from Manchester Piccadilly on service 39. The last Fleetline was 6988, the third highest numbered example of the ex-LUT batch and of all the Fleetlines once renumbering to 4988 occurred; the last Atlantean was the third highest numbered of the type. The last Fleetline departed Piccadilly at 17.55 on the day in question, three years, 17 hours and one minute before the last Atlantean.

They live on elsewhere

Although the two companies that once formed GMT no longer run Atlantean 'Standards', a few remain in use with local independents while others can be found in various fleets around the country. EYMS subsidiary Finglands of Rusholme was expected to dispose of its remaining quartet by Christmas, upon delivery of its four new Plaxton-bodied Volvo B7TLs, but one of them (1756, formerly 8671) was still carrying schoolchildren and the general public in January.



MR Travel of Rochdale has late-built steel-framed 8440 and alloy-framed 8437 and 8538, again on general services as well as school contracts. Stott of Oldham has several Atlanteans, as well as Fleetlines 6984 and 8047, on school services, while Mayne's of Droylesden continues to use Fleetlines 8144/5 (re-registered IAZ 4775/6) on peak hour stage services. But Rossendale Transport recently placed its remaining Atlanteans in store.

The 'Standard' Atlanteans and Fleetlines were synonymous with the area, the PTE and its successor operators for over 30 years and, in some areas, there appeared to be few other types in service. Now — with the few exceptions just mentioned — they have gone, ending three eras.

They end Atlantean operation that began when Manchester Corporation got its first 10 PDR1/1s in 1960. They end the operation of first generation Atlanteans and Fleetlines designed specifically for Selnece PTE requirements. And, apart from a couple of TL11-engined Olympians, this also was the end of a long tradition of Leyland-powered vehicles being the mainstay of many of the undertakings that came together between 1969 and 1976 to form the Selnece/Greater Manchester operation.

Happily, healthy numbers of GMT Standards survive in preservation, reflecting their popularity with enthusiasts and the fact that this was one of the most prolific operator-specific types outside London. Their numbers have been swollen by 8758 and possibly one other recently withdrawn example from Bolton depot.

Others already in private preservation are Atlanteans 7719, 8151, 8460, 8551 and 8697 and Fleetlines 6927/31. The Manchester Museum of Transport has Atlanteans 7001 and 8706, while the greatest concentration of them all is with the Selnece Preservation Society. Its collection includes Atlantean 7143, 7501, 7960 plus the first and last of all, prototype EX1 and 8765. Its Fleetline collection comprises prototype EX19, 7185, 7206, 7232, 8001, 8141 and former LUT examples 6901/90 and unique rebodied 6912. Additionally, Atlantean 7070 and Fleetline 6950 have been acquired as a source of spares.

With the hard work and dedication of all those involved with those vehicles, the GMT Standard will live on for many years to come.



10 KEY FACTS ABOUT GMT STANDARDS AND THEIR MANY ANTECEDENTS

- The first 'Standard' Atlanteans were PDR1A/1s EX1-6, built on chassis ordered by Ashton.
- 205 of the Atlanteans were bodied by Park Royal, the rest by Northern Counties.
- There were 605 'Standard' Fleetlines, including prototypes EX7-21 of 1972 (chassis ordered by Bury and Rochdale). Park Royal bodied 55, Northern Counties the others.
- 53 Fleetlines had two-door bodies; all other Standards were single-door.
- Accident-damaged Fleetline 6938 was converted to 28-seat single-decker 1697 in 1985.
- The Standard design evolved from the Mancunian, built on 199 Atlanteans and 293 Fleetlines between 1968 and 1972 with bodywork by Park Royal, Roe, Metro-Cammell Weymann and East Lincs.
- Besides the Standards and Mancunians, Selnece/GMT inherited 142 Atlanteans and 130 Fleetlines from Manchester, 67 Atlanteans and five Fleetlines from Salford, 132 Atlanteans from Bolton, 18 Atlanteans and 28 Fleetlines (nine Fleetlines were single-deck) from Bury. Other Atlanteans came from Ashton (17), Oldham (72) and Wigan (32); Fleetlines came from the SHMD Board (35), Rochdale (36 including four single-deck), North Western (72) and Lancashire United (26).
- Large-scale withdrawals of Standards began in 1986 when over 450 buses became surplus to requirements on the formation of GM Buses. The PTE set up a joint venture company with dealer Kirkby Central to sell many Fleetlines and all semi-automatic Atlanteans.
- When the GM Buses fleets were privatised in 1994, GM Buses North (now First Manchester) had 427 'Standard' Atlanteans and 104 Fleetlines; GM Buses South (now Stagecoach Manchester) had 297 Atlanteans and 21 Fleetlines.
- Stagecoach Manchester's last Standards (Magic Bus-liveried Atlanteans) were withdrawn in 1999.

Much of this information came from Greater Manchester Buses by Stewart J. Brown, published by Capital Transport in 1995 (£19.95, ISBN 185414 174 0).



Above: Atlantean 4458 (SND 458X) in Bolton in 1998. It was in the 'tomato soup' orange introduced after FirstGroup acquired GM Buses North and has the 'Greater Manchester' fleetnames used before the company was renamed First Manchester. ALAN MILLAR

Left: The Atlantean formerly known as 8329 (MNC 529W) in service in Hull last year with City Central, disguised as Kingston upon Hull Corporation Transport 234. JOHN YOUNG

TWO SETS OF NUMBERS

The renumbering of many of the Standards, carried out in 1991, requires further clarification.

All Atlanteans and Fleetlines in the 69xx and 8xxx series were renumbered by replacing the first digit with a 4, in connection with a new radio call system being introduced. The remaining 7xxx series Atlanteans were not renumbered and 7077 remained with First Manchester until 2000.

As they retained their 4xxx series numbers throughout their operation by First Manchester, we have used those numbers in most of this account, but in referring to the buses sold to other operators or saved for preservation, we have used the 69xx and 8xxx numbers.

INSIDE TRACK

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE (PERHAPS)

TIMOTHY A. SMITH gives an industry insider's view of why some operators' approach to publicity falls far behind the standards of the best

If operators do not treat their customers with respect and consult them effectively on changes then they do not deserve their custom. — Quotation by a senior bus industry manager.

Close your eyes and imagine . . . I have heard that my local operator is considering changes to my local service, partly because traffic congestion is getting worse and timings need to be adjusted, but also to increase effective frequency. There are clear notices telling me about this on all the buses and in the information office. There are leaflets and posters and the information staff have been fully briefed.

I switch on my computer, hit my bus operator's website and, sure enough, it draws my attention to the changes. There are draft timetables for me to inspect, with full colour used to illustrate what is proposed. The changes to individual services are described in detail, along with maps of routes and explanations for everything that is happening.

But this is just the start. There is an opportunity for me to e-mail my comments and concerns directly to company management and a guarantee that I will receive a response before the scheme is finalised. All of this gives me several weeks to talk to my family and friends about any changes that might affect them . . .

So is it time to wake up and come back in to the real world now? No! While this may be light years away from most *Buses* readers' experience of major service changes, there is nothing futuristic about it. This is exactly what is happening with some revisions currently being made by Trent Buses to its Allestree and Darley Abbey area services. All the information I describe above is on its website along with the commitment to genuine consultation with customers.

I have compared my experience of Trent to that of three other operators who have made major changes in the past year — Nottingham City Transport, First Edinburgh and Stagecoach Midland Red. In all three cases, it is difficult to identify satisfactory advance information, let alone any serious consultation. So why does performance vary so greatly?

Ignoring the Holy Grail of profit growth

The simple answer would perhaps be that some operators are better than others and that Trent is among the best. Given that all the evidence suggests that this type of consultation actually increases profitability — the Holy Grail for most operators — and is not difficult, what is holding them back?

Those with longer memories may believe that this is a legacy of the 'Rambo effect' that followed deregulation in 1986. Relieved of what was perceived by many industry managers as unnecessary and unhelpful interference by local authority officers and their political masters, there was a natural tendency to embrace the new commercial freedoms with gusto.

In some cases, this was with a two-finger salute to any requirement to ask anyone in advance about what you wanted to do. This, of course, was throwing out the baby with the bath water. There were many valid criticisms of some of the political decisions made, supposedly in the name of bus users. This was the ideal opportunity to engage directly with the customers themselves. Unfortunately, few operators saw it that way.

Northumbria was one of the few that did, conducting its own bus user surgeries and discussing many features of new buses with its customers before ordering new vehicles. Fifteen years later, it appears to be left to relative newcomers to local bus operation — like Hackney Community Transport — to go this far, although some of the large groups do claim to have involved

passengers in interior design. I have yet to meet anyone, though, who will own up to having a hand in First's Barbie colour scheme.

Too little time for consultation

A third perspective is that there is insufficient time for consultation or that disclosing your intentions in advance may place you at a competitive disadvantage. Neither of these objections holds any water, except in a few instances. The change in the notice period for new or amended registrations for local services (up from six weeks to eight) may further help to slow down the sometimes hectic process of change. But will this increase or decrease the likelihood of effective consultation?

Trent is in no doubt that its efforts to consult customers pay immediate dividends and it contrasts the modest cost of the exercise with the additional custom that it knows it brings. Other operators say that they now plan to engage in consultation with their customers, although it is not clear whether this will be as meaningful as Trent's approach.

A research report completed in 1999 suggested that, in the absence of any efforts to ameliorate the inevitable disruption and confusion, a major change in local bus services was likely to result in the loss of just under 1% of passengers, as a 'natural wastage' effect. This loss can be avoided with both effective consultation and satisfactory advance publicity.

Effective consultation is not difficult, it is not expensive and it more than pays for itself in direct commercial benefits to the company from customers.

So what does the Confederation of Passenger Transport, as guardian of the standards of responsible operators, have to say on this? Sadly I have not seen any indication of guidance on good practice from the CPT. Here is one area, surely, where the bus industry can adopt and promote a standard for the benefit of its customers.

Perhaps a firm in the communications business would like to think about sponsoring a 'Bus Industry Award' for the operator who communicates most effectively with its passengers. Or would this simply become another annual accolade for Trent Buses?

Left: Trent's high standards of publicity, customer consultation and information — including that for its Chesterfield-Nottingham routes branded as The Red Arrow — continue to put many others in the shade. Here, Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Interurban 61 (R61 RAU) loads at the northern end of the route. TONY WILSON



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Reviews

BOOKS

WORKS DRIVER: A VIEW OF SOUTHDOWN FROM THE INSIDE

BRUCE ALEXANDER MACPHEE, DINNAGES TRANSPORT PUBLISHING (PO Box 2210, Brighton, BN1 9WA). 210MM x 145MM, 72pp, SOFTBACK, £7.00.

The main purpose of this book is 'to pass on to those interested from a mechanical point of view, details other than those that they might learn from other sources', written as it is by a member of the engineering staff turned driver. It certainly fulfils its purpose, but that sentence does not do justice to the relaxed and engaging style in which it is all done or the social history and humour throughout.

It did indeed tell me things that I didn't know before about all sorts of Southdown buses and practices, including details of the Queen Mary story that are both interesting and new to me. It also tempered various myths that I had believed for many years — such as the usefulness of the Guys (reliable but slow) and the strangeness of our regular driver's choice for school field trips (a Tiger Cub with a non-standard engine size).

Beyond that, the book benefits from an affection for the company (for example, *'Although Southdown was not at the cutting edge of technology regarding vehicles, often choosing the most conservative specification possible, the vehicles did give reliable service with good fuel economy and a much better than average standard of passenger comfort'*) leavened with an eye for the silly and the social history of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

This all comes together in two stories from Seaford about the procedures for delivering crew pay and transferring takings to the bank — the latter was afforded much more security involving a bus, presumably because there was much more money involved. See p41 for some hilarity about theory and practice.

The author's experiences parallel my own. He was at Portslade Works when I was a schoolboy spotter and was driving from Seaford when I was working in Southdown's booking office at Worthing (a story I must tell some day). He also had a spell at Brighton Hove & District but didn't enjoy it much, finding BH&D's methods of working much less sociable than Southdown's. Certainly, we always thought we did much more work than Southdown proper (loads plus shift patterns) and a certain *esprit de corps* was never lost in the days when BH&D was part of Southdown.

I didn't spot any errors, but when I felt moved to query something I found myself wanting to start a discussion about it rather than nit-pick. I was sorry when I got to the end.

JULIAN OSBORNE

ALL ABOARD! 100 YEARS OF TRAMS, TROLLEYS AND BUSES IN CARDIFF

ROGER DAVIES, CARDIFF CITY TRANSPORT SERVICES (Leckwith Depot, Sloper Road, Cardiff, CF11 8TB). 220MM x 210MM, 58pp, SOFTBACK, £3.99.

As the title makes clear, this book marks one of the year's significant anniversaries. It was on 1 January 1902 that Cardiff County Borough (today's Cardiff County Council) took over the city's horse trams from Provincial Tramways — the same company whose name survived in Gosport, Fareham and Portsmouth until First's recent decision to remove local bus identities.

Roger Davies, a son of the city, has performed a grand job in striking the right balance between general atmospheric information and the sort of technical detail demanded by enthusiasts. He has been aided by the design and printing skills of the *South Wales Echo* newspaper. £1 from the sale of each book will be donated to two South Wales hospices.

You shouldn't expect a definitive history for £3.99, but you get the highlights and flavour of the past 100 years, well illustrated in black and white and colour and leavened by short anecdotes from retired employees. You'll even learn that the actress Diana Dors caught a Cardiff tram in 1947 — and that her Uncle Bert was the driver.

Two colour shots reminded me of things I had forgotten from more recent times. One shows a former Plymouth Leyland Atlantean bought in the 1980s to help replace older vehicles, and add further variety to a fleet that pursued a far-from-standardised approach to vehicle selection over the third quarter of the 20th century.

The other shows an AEC Swift, a Guy Arab V and a Daimler Fleetline lined up in 1971 to show three proposed new liveries; the public's vote went for the Swift's lighter orange, rather than a darker shade or Arriva-like turquoise.

ALAN MILLAR

VIDEOS

REMEMBER THE TRACKLESS — THE TROLLEYBUSES OF MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON AND ROTHERHAM

ONLINE VIDEO/ROTHERHAM TROLLEYBUS GROUP. 78min. £16.00 (The Rotherham Trolleybus Group, 113 Tinker Lane, Walkley, Sheffield, S6 5EA).

The mark of a good video is one that gives true insight, inspires new interest or enhances memory through accuracy and attention to detail. This is a good video and it's in a good cause, as proceeds go towards the restoration of Rotherham's single-deck Sunbeam 74 (CET 613) to fully operational condition.

Joint aspects of these two distinctive trolleybus systems are well depicted. Our video tour is led in stages by system maps and follows a chronological sequence. Plentiful, beautifully crisp black and white footage is a highlight. Early single-deckers of both systems feature in detail, for Rotherham was only the fourth 'trackless' operator in Britain. Plenty of ciné colour film in the 1960s follows, with well-researched and informative commentary. Detail includes the price of a double-deck reboddy, but this doesn't overload the commentary.

Some unique events include the only double-decker to venture to Conisbrough (a Garrett demonstrator) and, at closure, colour scenes of the only Rotherham single-decker ever to venture there. There are memorable scenes of Mexborough & Swinton single-decks winding their way around steep and narrow lanes, and at well known spots like Denaby Crossing. Expansion and contraction (and final runs) of both systems are covered, all the while with fascinating glimpses of trams or contemporary diesel buses — especially of Rotherham's Bristols at focal points like Effingham Square.

Stills are interspersed to good effect, for example showing Doncaster's double-deck trolley 362 arriving on tow and being poled up to test clearances on the Rotherham system, having severely overheated a Rotherham Bristol tow-car in the process. The chassis of the tow-car is still a mystery, but the trial led to successful rebodding of single-deckers to double-deckers — with beneficial effects on receipts. The Rotherham Trolleybus Group would welcome information on the tow-car, at its address above.

Afterlife of three kinds is shown. The National Trolleybus Association's 44 is shown guesting in Manchester and Wolverhampton, while others are filmed in scrapyards. We see two Rotherham single-deckers at rest after use at San Sebastian, but original single-deckers are shown at work in Cadiz and, later, with new bodies. Brief contemporary scenes show the Sheffield Supertram at Meadowhall and surviving former trolleybus depots.



A still from 'Remember the Trackless' showing Rotherham 17 (FET 617), a 1950 East Lancs-bodied Daimler CTC6, which was rebuilt with a new Roe double-deck body when just six years old and became Rotherham 37.

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Trolleybus sound effects are dubbed fairly satisfactorily to most scenes, but, please, what sounds like a tranquil garden with birds chirping isn't appropriate to a wet day in downtown Rotherham. Commentary is also very much in '1960s transport society' style.

The video made me want to head straight for Mexborough and Rotherham to enjoy the sights. But though we'll never be able to do that, sampling the delights of both systems through this window on the past is the next best thing. Well recommended.

JOHN G. LIDSTONE

SHEFFIELD BUS MUSEUM

**NOVA HOME ENTERTAINMENT. 60min.
£9.99 (11A Winholme, Armthorpe.
Doncaster, DN3 3AF).**

Although there is still an understandable bias towards the subject matter of its South Yorkshire base, Nova is steadily establishing itself as a producer of some of today's better quality bus videos, with good standards of filming, editing, commentary and sound. Video muzak is confined to the title sequences and there is plenty of variety to encourage the viewer to stay the course and, with luck, consider watching (and listening) again.

This latest production was produced in conjunction with the Sheffield Bus Museum (which also is one of the retailers) and essentially tells you about its collection of 27 buses, support vehicles and a tram body. It does this particularly well by considering groups of the vehicles in chronological order. It explains something of their history (sometimes with archive footage, especially from the end of Sheffield's trams in 1960), how they were built (restoration work providing an excellent opportunity to do this) and how bus design has evolved.

Andrew White — in reality Mr Nova — delivers the commentary with clarity, and the script writers have made an excellent job of telling enthusiasts about the finer points of a PD2, Regent V or Ailsa, while also informing lay audiences (like school groups) of the broader tale of the development of street public transport over the past 50 years.

Nova only uses recordings of real bus sounds when making its videos, and almost as a spin-off it also sells CD recordings of these. Its latest, 'The Sounds of Half-Cabs' costs £8.99 and has 65min of Daimlers, Leylands and AECs. If you have a PC or AppleMac computer, there's a bonus of two short video sequences of a Barton PD1 and an Eastbourne Regent V.

ALAN MILLAR

1/76TH SCALE MODELS

BUSES MODEL CO. CHINA MOTOR BUS LEYLAND OLYMPIAN LM10 AND GUY ARAB SERVICE CAR

CMB's 10 LM-class Alexander RH-bodied Olympians marked the end of Leyland receipts and also of non air-conditioned bodywork, and this is the only off-the-shelf diecast that captures so perfectly the Leyland wheeltrims.

This is a sign of the high standard of detail that includes recessed front and rear destination indicators edged in pseudo-rubber, with displays printed behind Perspex. The doors and the front dash look as if they could open, and small ventilation louvres over the lower saloon windows are cast, rather than printed.

Interior detailing includes correctly liveried ceiling and seats, lettering panels on the staircase, photo-etched stanchions in scale, DiPTAC lime green finish and a driver's cab with tiny detailed dash. The correctly liveried inside has wonderfully detailed ceilings on both saloons, complete with panel joints and lamps. The floor may be the same dark blue as the seating, but realism is otherwise enhanced by the lack of unsightly construction poles.

A strange contrast are the foglamps set into the black bumper; this has rivet detailing, but the lamps are represented by crude silver oblongs, which beg to be real lenses (why weren't they?). The round headlamps are realistic plastic lenses, but side/direction indicators are also painted blobs. Time for harmony between these — and lenses all round (including UK releases).

The reduced-wheelbase Guy Arab MkV recovery/towing car is another exquisite, if tiny casting. The original was converted in 1982 from an S-class double-decker with Metsec bodywork, new in 1963, and fitted then with a Leyland Victory-style grille, as used in the outstandingly successful LX-class Arab rebodies of the 1980s.

Not only does the model capture perfectly the unique styling, but such ancillary add-ons as the front bumper bars with red hashing, the roof-mounted 'CMB RECOVERY' panel with twin warning lamps, even the opening bonnet and cab door are a delight. The 'business section' at the rear is wonderful, with workbench and cupboards, an oil drum, a traffic cone and a seat in the covered section for recovery crew. There is also a towing eye, recessed lights and registration plate.



A second service car release is water tanker AC 4723 — these toured termini and topped up oil drums filled with radiator water. In turn, drivers topped up their buses at each outer terminus to prevent boiling. In half-blue, half-cream and superbly detailed, this was also converted from an S-class (in 1980). Unusually, it's largely a resin model, but doesn't look it, and is weighted to feel like metal. One tip with both models is that the tiny rearview mirrors are far too delicate and snap off if you touch them.

You pay for this level of detail. The LM retails for £40 to £45 while the Arabs are available from George Hatt at Digby's Miniature Automobiles (01225 768821) for £39 plus postage.

ABC MODELS CHINA MOTOR BUS MCW METRORIDER

Many Hong Kong castings feature over-size variants of UK chassis, so it makes a pleasant change to see a direct UK equivalent as CMB's neat half-blue, half-cream CM1 on route 262. There were only two of the real things.

It captures the Metrorider's raked appearance, with tropical-size full-depth opening windows printed on to glazing. The current fetish for opening flaps detracts from the otherwise perfect lines, as the top of the bonnet sits out proud from the line of the windscreen base (but sits beautifully flush otherwise). Lift the bonnet — which stays up if you want to simulate a breakdown or maintenance scene — to reveal a prominent radiator with engine almost hidden behind it.

An air conditioning grille in the offside is printed on to the bodywork. Interior rails (inside the windows) are omitted, but the rearview mirrors are happily robust. Digby's sells this for £35 plus post.



CORGI ORIGINAL OMNIBUS HONG KONG CITYBUS MAN 24.350/VOLGREN DOUBLE-DECK

It's good to see a Corgi offering an excellent casting in the Hong Kong market. It retails at around £25 and shows Citybus 2500, the first Australian-built Volgren CR221LD body on the MAN 24.350 chassis.

Outstanding features are the dot matrix front and rear destination/numeral displays and the etched grilles for the air conditioning and engine cover. The opening engine cover is delicate, as it is in scale; on my review model, the rear nearside didn't fit as perfectly as the offside.

As we now expect from Corgi, badging and lettering is first class, as is crisp livery application. There's a little more cab detailing than we're used to, with a coin farebox and instrument binnacle outlined. On the downside, it has plastic-looking wheels (which are), the headlamps are insufficiently realistic and the construction poles penetrate both decks, standing out against bright red seating.

Models reviewed by JOHN G. LIDSTONE



YOU WRITE

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A council that reads our pages

Further to the comments in his article ('Service Extra' February) regarding the 'scary bus experience' on the A24 between Worthing and Horsham, can I assure Julian Osborne that we are well aware of the problem about which he writes?

We are actively investigating ways to improve stopping facilities for buses along this road and elsewhere in West Sussex. The A24 is a national primary route and a vital element of the county council's strategic route network, but it has a poor safety record overall. To improve this for everyone, we are putting in place a route safety strategy to reduce overall traffic speeds and prevent further accidents.

For public transport, improvements could include building lay-bys, relocating stops to safer positions or closer to the settlements they serve, or improving pedestrian links to existing stops. There have been no recorded accidents in recent years involving stopped buses along this stretch of road.

The overall intention is to increase accessibility to bus services along this route, but in a way that is consistent with the nature of the road. Our strategy to reduce traffic speeds and improve safety at bus stops will increase safety for all road users.

David Hampton
Traffic Policy Officer,
West Sussex County Council,
Chichester

Claustrophobic contravision

I agree with Julian Osborne ('Service Extra' January). The government and other authorities are constantly urging us to use public transport and the various bus groups regularly try to persuade us to use their services. Why then are buses made less

attractive to use by the absence or plating over of rear windows and the covering of some buses with contravision advertisements?

Many people enjoy travelling by bus or tram because they want to let someone else do the driving and look at the passing countryside or even the city scenery. It is therefore irritating to find oneself on a bus or tram that is covered in contravision that makes the environment in the vehicle claustrophobic and which also makes it difficult to see outside the vehicle.

However, it also makes it difficult to see the stop at which you wish to get off. The lack of a window at the back of the bus can also be claustrophobic. My worst experience of this was travelling on Blackpool's Michelin balloon tram with the intention of seeing the illuminations and being unable to appreciate the lights properly because of the contravision.

I hope that when quality partnerships are being negotiated a condition will be that vehicles covered in contravision will not be used. Why should passengers pay the full fare for the doubtful privilege of travelling in a mobile advertising hoarding?

Terry Challis
Leigh, Lancs



The lips on the contravision advertisement on this Dublin Bus Volvo Olympian may not quite be sealed, but it looks as if visibility through most of the windows has been. We can't tell if it's by accident or design, but normal vision is available on the window at the top of the stairs.

Poetic trolleybuses

Don't worry about bus hatred (Editorial, February). Somewhere in one of his poems, Philip Larkin enthuses over trolleybuses — obviously of the late lamented Hull variety.

A. Killick
Marlborough, Wilts

Contrasting views about Warwickshire's rural Citaros

'Citaros in the countryside' (*Buses*, January) put across very effectively the dilemma that most county councils must have. Is it worth spending a lot of money in areas that produce few passengers?

Choosing Mercedes-Benz Citaros may have been a 'Rolls Royce' solution, but there have been several benefits. First and foremost, it has improved the quality of buses on the services involved almost beyond recognition. The lowest bid system of awarding tenders has often resulted in old vehicles being used, which, in wealthy rural areas, can only emphasise the view of buses as the transport

of last resort. Now Warwickshire County Council has buses to be proud of.

Publicity has reflected this, and this in turn has raised the profile of local buses to the public. Secondly, the project encouraged more bus and coach operators than usual to tender. Johnson's, for example, was not running regular local bus services at the time.

Almost all of Stratford Blue's services were tendered, and sadly in Status Group days it operated an ageing and untidy fleet. In contrast, Johnson's and Guide Friday are both substantial businesses with good reputations for looking after passengers. It is right to ask whether all this is good value for money, but if passenger numbers have risen in line with expectations I would suggest that the money spent on this pioneering project has not been wasted.

Peter Hale
Shirley, Solihull

I note Kevin McGovern's apparent dismay that Warwickshire operators are seeking higher prices for contracts and that he is seeking to 'combat' this. I also note that his county is 'suffering from a shortage of quality operators and operations', and 'operators were either unwilling or unable to invest in new vehicles'. Notwithstanding this, the county council still wants to improve the standard of vehicles.

It would have made interesting reading if Mr McGovern had demonstrated to us how these two disparate outlooks might be reconciled. The same article highlighted how little this particular transport department lives in the real world, by trying to operate a vehicle that needs to work two completely different traffic types — high capacity school work and low-floor wheelchair accessible.

There are companies that choose to operate older (but well maintained) vehicles and pay their drivers a decent rate of pay. Are these drivers supposed to take a pay cut in order to fund Mr McGovern's philosophy? Perhaps Mr McGovern should take a pay cut and save the county council some more money. That is the real world.

Perhaps *Buses* could make this the basis for a future article — something that would be read with great interest by those of us in the real world.

Malcolm Thurling
Tring, Herts

The downside of standing in artics

John Anderson makes a number of relevant and valid points ('You Write' February) about standing passengers on 12m single-deckers that I think apply with even greater force to articulated 'bendibuses'.

I have travelled home recently a couple of times just at the start of the tea-time rush hour on Wright Fusion-bodied Volvo B10LAs on First Leeds's Brown Line Overground route. This passes Leeds University and many of the student halls of residence and, as you can imagine, on both occasions the bus was bursting at the seams.

Passengers had to stand embarrassingly close to each other in the aisle and quite a few were standing in the doorway alongside the driver. It was near impossible for passengers

wishing to alight to get to either of the doors. Having always had doubts about their stated standing capacity of 90, I counted the number of people standing and was not too surprised to find both times that it was about 40. These buses really were completely full and I do not know where the other 50 standees were supposed to go — on the roof perhaps.

The amount of road space occupied by these buses has been justified by their carrying capacity (55 seated plus 90 standing for the Leeds examples). This is simply not true and it is about time that fact was recognised. Even with fewer than half the official maximum number of standing passengers, the journey was extremely unpleasant and such conditions will never attract people away from their cars. Still, we are due to get 'bendi-trams' on this route in two or three years' time. I wonder how many standing passengers they will take.

Gordon Brooke
Leeds

A recipe for fare evasion

Andrew Braddock's vision of a London with long single-deckers and passengers entering through two or more doors (*Buses* December) may 'let the service run faster', but if passengers do not have to pass the driver, then there will be fare evasion on a large scale.

To carry out an effective on-board ticket inspection on a crowded rush hour bus with many standing passengers would be difficult.

We already have 'free' travel on the Croydon tram system as no ticket inspection is carried out. Will Mr Braddock now arrange for us to have 'free' travel on London buses?

J. R. Jones
London, SW19

Why London's buses should all be red

I am glad to hear that Mayor Ken Livingstone has decreed that all Transport for London buses will be going back to their original colour of London red.

The colour of London's buses should never have been changed. Tourists come from all over the world to see the red bus fleet and the tourists are not just confined to the City of London and Westminster. They have been known to travel out into the other London boroughs and they don't expect to see blue and cream, green, yellow or any other fancy colours.

M. Calvert
Dagenham

Look at the livery debate from this angle

I don't wish to enter the Stripes or Swoops controversy (*Buses* January). The letters in that issue make clear that the various Arriva, First and Stagecoach liveries are very much a matter of personal taste. But an hour before I read these letters and the accompanying article, I observed a Stagecoach London bus, very much covered in the road grime of a damp

December day, and it was all too obvious that the multiple colours around the rear wheels magnified the dirty effect. That would not have been too noticeable had that area of the bus all been one colour.

I have never understood why so many bus liveries divide the lower panels horizontally at a level where the line is broken up by the wheelarches. Look at the photos on pages 6, 9 (Sykes of York), 13 (Tellings-Golden Miller) and all on pages 34 and 35 of the January issue to see what I mean. On all of these, the 'relief' colour, along which the eye perceives the design of the bus, is broken up by the wheelarches to give the effect of three short pieces of striping.

Given that the lower panels are going to become dirty from road spray, it must surely follow that the lower section of the panel should be the darker of the two colours and that, second, the lower portion should be at least as high as the top of the mudguards.

In these respects, the Johnson's County Links, and the others, all fail the test. Looking at the Go-North East vehicle on page 22, why is the blue at the front not just a few inches higher, so as to avoid that fussy blue mudguard intrusion into the red area? It would look much better if the red followed a straight line. And as for that bottom cream band on the East Yorkshire bus, also on page 22, that is the most serious error of all.

Now turn back to page 23 and look again at the Delaine livery, which everybody seems to agree is superb. Notice how the white band on the lower panels follows a straight and unbroken line above the wheelarches, yet still relieves the expanse of blue. The white line is continued at the same level across the front panel, narrowed only slightly to follow the contours of the windscreen. The amidships white relief also follows a straight line, marred just a little by the jog above the door.

Finally, the white band below the top deck windows is continued around the front, but given a pleasing swoop to surround the indicator. The whole effect is restrained and pleasing to the eye at the same time. In short, it's magnificent. Well done, Delaine, and I'll bet you didn't spend thousands of pounds paying some eccentric design consultant to produce it.

On the same theme, out of 200 or so buses at the North Weald Rally in 2000, many treated to stripes and swoops of various hues, by far the most attractive was the Wilts & Dorset vehicle, with its bright red and white livery, enhanced by black trim, all following the natural lines of the bus. Frankly, it put all the others in the shade.

So I leave readers with two thoughts. Be careful about lower panelling, don't let the wheelarches break up the line of the relief or second colour; and do design the livery to take account of the lines and contours of the bus itself.

E. Relton
Ilford

Should they be red at the front . . . ?

A further few comments on the new Stagecoach livery, now that we have experienced it through the winter months.

The backs of vehicles inevitably get dirty and I would say that red here is the wrong colour. Perhaps blue would disguise this more successfully. This would also resolve the problem of easily seeing the oncoming bus at night, since the blue front end is poorly visible in the dark and at dusk.

It's no use relying on indicators since these are often not working or are not lit. Red would be a more welcoming colour at the front. Alternatively, the front end should perhaps have been in yellow for better visibility, rather like the train fronts on the group's South West Trains units.

The new livery is a bold and welcome change, but winter has shown up some impractical considerations.

Howard Webb
Aldershot

Readers may have noticed in last month's 'Global News' section that the experimental application of the new livery style at Citybus in Hong Kong has red at the front and back, with the lighter blue used for the skirt. Perhaps this is a sign that Stagecoach may also be having second thoughts about its blue fronts. — Ed.

. . . and are they invisible?

Stagecoach's new livery first appeared in the Midland Red fleet in February last year and it was my immediate opinion, and that of many driver colleagues at Nuneaton garage, that the layout of the different splashes of colour did not well suit the Alexander PS-bodied Volvo B10Ms to which it had first been applied. It will be recalled that all the publicity depicted ALX-style bodywork.

It takes time to adjust to anything new, but while I was thinking that we would become as used in time to the new livery as the white and stripes, I was driving into Coventry on a dark foggy morning and realised that I had just passed a bus in the new livery. It was almost invisible. The dark blue front plus windscreen plus dimly lit destination had merged into the foggy darkness. 'Wonderful!' I thought sarcastically.

Some days later, I drove a new liveried bus for the first time. In broad daylight I was travelling along the wide, straight A47 towards Nuneaton and noticed two people standing on the pavement near a bus stop sign. I slowed, but they made no move until I was almost upon them, when they suddenly sprang to life to hail the bus.

The elderly gentleman apologised and explained that he thought I was a lorry. Just a few minutes later, I passed an articulated truck belonging to Sainsbury's — dark blue front, white lettering (beginning with 'S') below the cab windscreen.

When the fact that there would be a new livery was first announced, I speculated that a scheme based on the South West Trains bus livery, with red front, would be chosen. The lack of white on the front of single-deckers is not a feature of double-deckers where, additionally, the orange areas look less uncomfortable.

Having a neutral — neither for nor against — opinion of the new livery (it does sit well on ALX-style bodies and minibuses) leaves me to enthuse about the livery of the Stagecoach

buses I drive on the Primeline route into Coventry. While featuring Stagecoach blue/red/orange/white, these colours are arranged in blocks separated by black lines in the manner of the Dutch artist, Mondrian.

Three Dennis Dart SLFs were transferred from Western Buses last autumn to operate and increased frequency on the route 48 Primeline. All arrived at Nuneaton in Stagecoach's new livery, but in being painted into the Primeline scheme I wonder if they are the first buses to be painted *out* of the new livery?

Ken Johnson
Nuneaton



Stagecoach Midland Red Dennis Dart/Alexander ALX200 155 (R155 CRW) in the Primeline livery mentioned in Ken Johnson's letter.

Too many colour schemes?

During the Christmas break I got round to thinking about the comments made on this subject. Paul Dudfield's comment about different liveries for different buses especially interested me.

Here in Andover we have a regular Wilts & Dorset service from Salisbury that can have any one of five liveries (bus, dual purpose, Park-&-Ride, Guide Friday and National Express) according to their intended use. This would be fine, except that I have travelled home from work on all five liveries on the same local service.

As an enthusiast, I am obviously pleased with the variety, especially when a National Express Bova Futura turns up. However, I wonder how confusing it is to the average passenger?

Alistair Taylor
Andover, Hants

Companies must change with the times

I continue to read with interest the views of fellow enthusiasts on the long running debate over corporate liveries. Having read the selection of letters in the January issue, may I take this late opportunity to raise one or two points that seem to have been overlooked?

First, I am surprised that anyone can honestly think Stagecoach's new livery is unattractive. I am even more surprised that several readers prefer the old one. Certainly, it had become something of a national institution, and I admit that I will be sad when it finally disappears, but it was far from suitable for the 21st century, its clashing colours and sharp lines oozing 1980s garishness.

Stagecoach was overtaken long ago by the luxurious new image of certain other big groups, primarily First, and needed to revamp itself to keep up with the competition. It is interesting, incidentally, how many people criticise the use of large amounts of off-white in the First liveries. What about the 80% pure white Stagecoach stripes livery? Is there some kind of exception for that one?

The new livery uses more modern shades of the original colours, applied in a much more attractive manner. Yet many enthusiasts seem to hate it. And what about 'Barbie' and 'Barbie 2'? Again, soft, flowing lines and modern, friendly colours. And again, the enthusiasts hate them.

As for Arriva, I am baffled at why so many people find this smart, simple and pleasant colour scheme so offensive. I fear that the reason many people dislike these liveries is not because of the colours or styles that they use, but merely because they are not green and cream, red and cream or anything else you would have expected to find on the streets 40 years ago.

This, I feel, is the point that many enthusiasts overlook. Companies must change with the times. Bus design is moving at a fast pace, and companies must adapt their services in the same way. Those who do not will be left far behind. Many enthusiasts compare old liveries with current schemes, claiming how much better buses would look if they were in Southdown apple green or East Kent-style dark red and cream. What they fail to realise is that, while these schemes were popular 40 years ago, they are outdated today, which is why nobody uses them any more.

Nobody would expect Dennis to suddenly start churning out Loline or Volvo to re-introduce the Leyland PD2, so don't expect operators to start using liveries that are as much out of date as the vehicles they once graced. The same goes for fleetnames — the ever-present Arriva-bashing army may like to take this on board.

Look at other transport operators: the rail companies, the airlines. They all use modern colour schemes, they all look good and they all keep up with the times. I am also a rail enthusiast, and nobody complains about modernisation of colour schemes on trains. Yes, many of us would love to see Southern Railway green and GWR chocolate and cream bought back, but we can all accept that in reality it would be totally unsuitable in today's modern world.

Bus enthusiasts should be no different. Bus companies need to stand out from their competitors, look good and present a modern image. We enthusiasts should support companies in their attempts to move forward, not complain because we are too stubborn to move with the times.

Glen Southgate
Portsmouth

Edinburgh 'wasn't in meltdown'

As a Scottish Omnibuses employee of the 1970s, I cannot let Harry Barker's comments ('You Write' January) on the roots of the situation in Edinburgh pass unchallenged. I know that the service then provided by the company did indeed fall far short of perfection

— especially in the west of its territory — but it would be unfair for readers to form a view of an operator in meltdown on the basis of Mr Barker's vitriolic comments.

Times were difficult for all operators in the mid-1970s, with rampant inflation and a 'hard' labour market. The Scottish Bus Group had arguably made life more difficult by adopting a fixed Monday to Friday week for platform staff, with voluntary weekend overtime. Despite these factors, however, services in the Edinburgh area were maintained without widespread cancellations, although the same could not be said of weekend services in the Glasgow area.

Staffing in the summer peak, caused by tour and express operations, was assisted by substantial use of students. The implication that on warm days additional excursions were run on the spur of the moment, with consequent loss of services, is ludicrous.

The allegation that 66% or more of weekend services failed to operate in 1977 is certainly not true of the Edinburgh and Borders areas and is insulting to the many dedicated drivers, conductors and supervisory staff who ensured that services ran.

Nevertheless, it was obvious that Lothian Region Transport continued the high standards of Edinburgh Corporation Transport, generally providing a very reliable service, with exceptionally well maintained and well presented buses. When the rebranded SMT (now First) decided to take advantage of deregulation to attack several core city corridors, admittedly using some useful innovations, Lothian was well placed to respond, using as its chief weapons

- reliability and
- low fares, especially for season tickets.

One weapon definitely not used was speed of services.

At this point I find sympathy with some of Mr Barker's comments. It should have been possible for a competent SMT to engage in successful, passenger-focused competition with Lothian outside the city. Instead, attention appears to have been directed inwardly, resulting in constant, destabilising change. The lessons of the 1970s about the importance of getting the operational basics right (and keeping them that way) were apparently forgotten.

The recent damaging resurrection of direct competitive activity within the city does not even have the virtue of offering any additional facilities to passengers.

Not content with condemning First and its predecessors, however, Mr Barker goes on to pillory Lothian's chief executive on the basis of his record with Stagecoach in Perth (around 10 years ago). Lothian responded in 1986 to SMT 'aggression' and indeed did press its advantages over the following years. Subsequently, a truce and some stability emerged, even with the agreement on some mutual acceptance of season tickets, until First reinvigorated its competition on fares and services.

In assessing Lothian's current position, Mr Barker seems to have forgotten a primary rule of justice — that actions should be judged according to the circumstances and motives at the time, and not on any prejudged notions of who is the 'good guy'.

Mention of the valuable, and now abandoned, mutual ticketing acceptance on evening and

Sunday services in the city emphasises that it is passengers who are the real losers in most disputes like this between operators. It saddens me to see the decline of once healthy and respected companies for dubious short-term gain, and this contest will potentially sacrifice the benefits of deregulation on the altar of egos and of avarice. We have seen enough collateral damage among our passengers and our colleagues, which the industry can ill afford.

The point is that both companies need to recognise the counter productive and humiliating position that the bus industry in Edinburgh now faces. The realpolitik of 2002 demands that they draw back from this bruising encounter in the interests of their passengers. This will also demonstrate that the post-deregulation maturity that the industry had been nurturing can work for the common good — and rise above the like of Mr Barker's bipartisan tirade into the bargain.

John Godfrey
Bishop Auckland

Time for commonsense in the Lothians

While I agree with the majority of comments Harry Barker makes ('You Write' January) about the provision of bus services in Lothian, there are a couple of points he made that I feel need to be clarified.

He refers to the former Lothian Region Transport's aggressive expansion into East, Mid (specifically) and West Lothian following deregulation. This is to a certain degree true although it should be remembered that the councils had shareholdings in LRT at the time and encouraged expansion following dissatisfaction with SMT's service provisions in those areas.

SMT had started to compete within the city of Edinburgh with a network of minibus routes including a certain C23 (Trinity-Morningside) in direct competition with LRT's existing route. Does this sound familiar?

It should also be noted that much has changed in the current situation in Lothian since the requirements at deregulation. Both First and Lothian Buses have completely different management teams in place and new potential transport links have been created by extensive urban and rural development.

Harry Barker suggests that Lothian Buses has driven First out of Penicuik and other places in Midlothian. This is not strictly the case as First had already withdrawn or reduced frequencies on key routes linking Edinburgh and Midlothian. Lothian Buses attempted to fill some of these gaps, most noticeably by replacing service 81 with new service 37 providing Loanhead, Roslin and Penicuik with a frequent service operated by brand new Dennis Tridents.

Unfortunately co-ordination and rationalisation of bus services still seems to be a long way off. As predicted, First recently suspended its cheap £1 day return tickets and has been in discussion with staff about loss of certain conditions that might allow it to recoup the losses made from the scheme.

Other operators in Lothian (including Lothian Buses) are keen to start joint ticketing throughout the Lothians. Unfortunately,

progression of this worthwhile venture appears to have been halted by First's reluctance to accept tickets outside the Edinburgh area and its insistence that it receives 50% of the takings. When will commonsense prevail?

Richard Walter
Musselburgh

Unwise to take it out on the drivers

One of the greatest problems facing the bus industry at present is its shortage of drivers. Everywhere in the bus press we read of companies being unable to develop desirable services or of others in trouble with the traffic commissioners for failing to operate registered services for this reason.

This is an unfortunate by-product of the relatively low levels of unemployment that the UK is enjoying at present, and indeed I heard recently of the operations director of one company who is hoping for an economic recession before too long so that his driver recruitment and retention problems might be eased.

Against this sort of background, therefore, it was quite amazing to read ('News' February) that First Edinburgh was balloting its drivers on which areas of their terms and conditions they wished to sacrifice in order to help fund the group's competitive assault on Lothian Buses.

Clearly, First has not found Lothian to be quite such an easy target as it might have expected, and revenue on the competing services is presumably falling short of budgeted levels. In that event, the group should be examining each service carefully and making whatever economies of operation that may be feasible, possibly withdrawing the worst performing service altogether.

There is a number of options open to any bus operator in this position, but I would suggest that, in the present climate, attacking wages and/or conditions of the drivers might be somewhat ill advised and could well lead to drivers leaving the company *en masse*. This could clearly impact on First Edinburgh's ability to operate even its core network, quite apart from the competitive services, and could play right into the hands of Lothian if it leads to the collapse of the competition.

As an aside, it seems a little disingenuous of First Edinburgh, as part of a worldwide group with vast resources at its disposal, to be whinging about the ferocity of the response produced by Lothian Buses, which is, after all, a relatively small local company that, to the best of my knowledge, does not enjoy the support of any of the major groups.

Did First Edinburgh really expect Lothian to sit back and do nothing? The phrase that comes to mind is 'If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen'.

D. R. Wallace, MCIT, MILT
Haywards Heath

How myths are made

In January *Buses* you carried a view of a Dublin Bus B7TL on p58. You (and others) have described the bus as having a BET windscreen. Not so. Look carefully at say a Bristol VRT or Leyland Olympian and you can

see the obvious difference in the way the lower edge turns up on the Dublin Bus but stays linear on a true BET. I cannot identify what the screen is, but BET it is not.

Duncan Roberts
Sheffield



These views of the fronts of Dublin Bus Volvo B7TL AV190 (01 D 10190) and Violet Bus Company's ex-Lothian Leyland Olympian/ECW 83 LH 930 (A717 YF5) illustrate Duncan Roberts's point about the slightly different shape of the Volvos' windscreens. Perhaps we should call them 'BET-style' 'screens. DARREN HALL

Competition in Huddersfield

Your story on competition in Huddersfield ('News' January) suggested that Yorkshire Traction has only had a base in Huddersfield since its acquisition of County Motors in National Bus Company days.

This is far from the truth. Yorkshire Traction and its predecessor Barnsley & District Traction have been serious providers of bus services in Huddersfield since May 1923.

Its first small depot in Dogley Lane was rented in late-1924, the next depot at Waterloo was acquired with the business of T. Mitchell in January 1926 and both of these were used until July 1926 when larger premises were purchased in Lincoln Street. St Andrew's Road, which was within half a mile of Tracky's Huddersfield terminal, stands in Lord Street.

In August 1927, B&D acquired a third share in County Motors, the Waterloo garage was then rented by B&D to County from October 1927 for £75 a year. In November 1928, B&D changed its name to the Yorkshire Traction Company.

In 1969, when Huddersfield Corporation purchased the NBC interests in the Huddersfield Joint Omnibus Committee, many of the JOC interests in services to Dewsbury, Sheffield and Halifax passed to Yorkshire Traction. In fact, after the formation of the JOC in 1929, the former Huddersfield Corporation service to Kirkburton passed to Yorkshire Traction in a tidying up exercise after the closure of the Kirkburton branch line by the London, Midland & Scottish Railway.

So in early 2002, Yorkshire Traction is the only bus company that has retained its identity and name and has served Huddersfield continuously for over 74 years (from the same headquarters in Upper Sheffield Road, Barnsley).

Geoff Lumb
Huddersfield

This is a letters page and the views expressed therein are purely the views of the writers; they do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or publisher of BUSES.

PICTUREVIEW



Above, right and below: Some buses are designed to navigate water. Or are they boats designed to negotiate dry land? Liverpool Duck Tours began operations last year with two World War 2 DUKW amphibians refurbished and converted to carry paying passengers. They operated tours from the city's Albert Dock every 75min. These views of Wacker Quacker II YSJ 668 show it splashing down, cruising round the docks and back on dry land. Both have Bedford 330 engines and this one was acquired from a French dealer. It was refurbished after just 800 miles' wartime use in France, then was placed in store and only released late in 2000 for sale to the Liverpool company. JOHN G. LIDSTONE



W FLOODTIDE

Left: The photographer recently discovered this reminder of flooding in Maidstone in September 1968 when sorting through his collection of old slides. It shows Maidstone Corporation 23 (23 YKO), a Massey-bodied Leyland Titan PD2A/30 ploughing through the overflow of the River Medway, while a Northern Counties-bodied Daimler Fleetline of Maidstone & District prepares to dive in on its way to West Malling. Leyland Atlanteans from both fleets are visible in the background.

ALAN MARTIN

Right: By comparison with the scene in Maidstone 30 years earlier, this November 1998 flooding on Glasgow's South Side — the after-effect of torrential rain on fallen autumn leaves — is quite tame, even if the wave is more dramatic. Making a splash that partly obscures a following Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS-type in the same fleet is First Glasgow VO163 (R663 DUS), a Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Palatine II 72-seater. Pending delivery of the 10 three-axle Volvo B7Ls mentioned in last month's *Buses*, this 1997 bus is still the operator's newest double-decker.

ALAN MILLAR



A WORLD FIRE

Everywhere has its vernacular — its colloquialisms — like California where 'diesel' is a dirty word. And despite the cleaning of diesel fuel itself, the state of California has a manic preoccupation with vehicle emissions, occasioned mostly by the 30 million private vehicles to be found on its freeways and highways.

For nigh on 30 years, state legislation has required a catalytic converter to be fitted on all cars, pick-ups and sports utility vehicles sold in California, and unleaded petrol is but a distant memory. However, there is no legislation in place to control emissions from heavy trucks, railway locomotives or fast food establishments, all of which pass into the atmosphere every day.

And diesel gets a bad rap here, so much so that many bus operators specify vehicles that are powered using alternative fuels. During the mid-1980s, the Los Angeles-based Southern California Rapid Transit District embarked on a large-scale programme of methanol-fuelled buses, which seemed fine until it was discovered that the fuel was corroding the engines of these vehicles. Eventually the operator, by now the Metropolitan Transit Authority, opted for compressed natural gas and this is now the most favoured alternative fuel for heavy vehicles.

The state capital of California is Sacramento, a city that lies in a valley.

Climate, topography and vehicle population all conspire in the summer months to create heavy smog, to such an extent that alerts are issued to warn people to stay indoors wherever possible and not to indulge in arduous exercise.

Unitrans has gone one better

Needless to say, transit agencies are mindful of this and most operators in the capital region have fleets of CNG-fuelled buses. These include Sacramento Regional Transit (almost 100% CNG), YoloBus and Unitrans. And the latter of these has gone one better by converting a double-decker to run on CNG. Indeed, this is no ordinary double-decker either, these days, being a mere stripling of some 50-years plus, former London Transport RT2819 (LYR 989).

'Twenty-eight nineteen?' I hear you ask. 'Isn't that the one it converted from AEC power to Cummins B-series/Allison MT643 just the other day?' Yes it is and no it isn't. It was 10 years ago that conversion took place and the bus has run satisfactorily ever since. So I asked Unitrans's maintenance supervisor Wally Mellor (he that is proudly Liverpoolian, Wally maintains that the only good thing ever to come out of London was the M1) why RT2819 was chosen for yet another conversion.

'Because it's the guinea pig,' Wal muses. 'Okay,' says I, 'but why the conversion to CNG?'

'As you know,' he says, 'we have a fleet already of Orion MkV buses that's CNG-fuelled. The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District was offering a grant of up to \$56,000 to help the conversion of diesel vehicles to CNG.'

I pursue my point. 'And?'

Wally's face brightens. 'I never could resist a challenge.'

'And that costs \$56,000?'

'No,' he says. 'We did our sums and we reckoned we could convert two double-deckers for that price, so that with the completion of RT2819, we will convert RT1235, which currently has a Leyland O.600 unit from a Routemaster.'

Once the decision had been made to convert RT2819, some research had to be done, not least of all into what engine would be used to propel the re-powered bus. As emissions were the key, the Cummins B-series was not in contention as this is not a clean burning engine; the Cummins ISX is suitable, but it is too big to fit an RT.

So once again computer aid was used, whereby engine dimensions, power output and alternative fuel application were compared with what was available on the US market. The answer was a little surprising, the John Deere 6.8litre engine.

While John Deere is associated



ST?

The Marshall-rebuilt Routemasters aren't the only London buses being heavily refurbished for further service.

MICHAEL DRYHURST reports from California where an RT has been converted to run on gas and its operator wants to buy new double-deckers. And before you ask, this definitely isn't an April Fool.

most readily with agricultural tractors, the company also makes proprietary engines for other applications; indeed, Unitrans's most recent intake was a batch of CNG-fuel Blue Bird transit buses equipped with an 8.1litre John Deere engine. RT2819 is the first heavy-duty vehicle fitted with the 6.8litre unit, which is manufactured primarily for light duty trucks and school buses.

Although the Blue Birds have CNG tanks under the floor, their normal siting on a bus is on the roof. Obviously, this would not be sensible on RT2819, so its tanks also went under the floor; there are five tanks — two each on the sides, outboard, and one under the stairs. To accommodate the latter, the battery holder had to be relocated under the lower saloon floor, aft of the rear axle.

The capacity of the five tanks is 36 therms, which is sufficient to provide a full day's running of around 140 miles, averaging the equivalent of 5mpg. While this is less than what was achieved with either the replacement Cummins or the original AEC, low emission credits provided by the Air Quality Board ensure that it is more economical.

Surprisingly despite the dimensions of the RT, the tanks were not custom made, but were available readily. They are made with a carbon/glassfibre wrap. Given the location of the tanks and their vulnerability to side impact, Wally Mellor designed a barrier to protect the tanks. Another precaution implemented is that the wheel mudflaps are made of 3/8th steel plate, so that rubber debris from a tyre blow-out will not puncture the tanks.

The final tanks protection (none of which is legally required but down to operator prudence) is that between the tanks and the lower saloon is a sheet of 3/16th steel plate. While all of this may suggest the bus has taken on the weight of an armoured bank truck, it actually weighs less the previously as the John Deere engine is very light and CNG is lighter than air, even with the tanks fully fuelled.

A Regent that's like a Lodekka downstairs

When the bus was retrofitted back in 1992, some modifications had to be made to accommodate the Cummins engine; this also was the case with the John Deere engine. Probably the major alteration this time was the fact that with this longer engine, its flywheel intruded farther into the lower saloon to an unacceptable degree. This was addressed by reversing the two front seats and securing them to the front bulkhead to create a sort of 'Lodekka Regent'.

Certain auxiliaries were mounted on the right of the engine and to accommodate these, the cab side firewall was moved farther to the right, and the items were boxed in. This necessitated removing the gearchange pedal, but it had been redundant anyway since the Allison transmission was fitted in 1992.

The biggest challenge with the John Deere was the exhaust manifold. This was attached to the underside of the engine, a less-than-ideal position given its proximity to the tanks. Ever resourceful, Wally had it reversed to sit atop the engine; as this repositioning restricted the cooling airflow, the RT bonnet plate was removed and replaced with a ventilating grille. Necessity is the mother of invention.

When the bus underwent its AEC-to-Cummins conversion, it was driven by a dual electrical system, a 12v output solely for the starter and the original 24v system for all the rest of the vehicle; it's now all 12v.

As I write this in January, the CNG-fuelled RT2819 has been in use for four months and no major problems have surfaced. At the time of the power conversion, the opportunity was taken to thoroughly overhaul and repaint the Park Royal body to give it the appearance of a brand new bus.

RT1235 (KGK 704) is expected to enter the Unitrans shop imminently for its conversion. When completed, the Unitrans double-decker fleet will be AEC-powered (RT742, 11.3litre unit purchased from Allco), Cummins-powered (RT3123 and RT 4735), John Deere-powered (RT1235 and RT2819) and Leyland-powered (RTL1014, retaining its O.600, currently awaiting new pistons and liners from the UK).

During 2000 and 2001, the operator sold its two 1969 ex-West Riding Daimler Fleetline/Roe double-deckers and both Wally Mellor and general manager Jim McElroy would like to replace them with two new low-floor double-deckers. But they say there is nothing available that is CNG-fuelled.

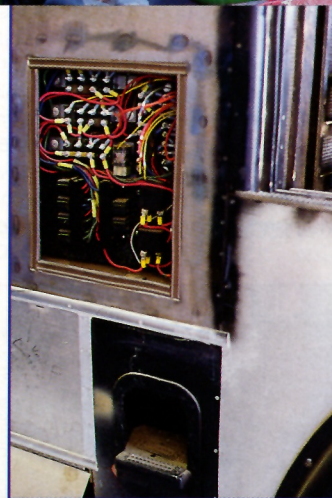
TransBus, are you reading this?

Opposite: Following its conversion to CNG power, RT2819 has gained additional ventilation at the bottom of the radiator and on the bonnet side, hence its repositioned fleetnumber. Additional beading at the bottom of the bodywork shows where two of the gas tanks are located. They are refuelled through the former diesel filler, a process that takes 5min. The large nearside mirror is needed for right-hand running. Pictures by MICHAEL DRYHURST



Top: Flywheel intrusion means that the two front seats downstairs have been reversed, with headrests added to the bulkhead windows.

Above: The new engine installed, with the exhaust manifold relocated from its original underslung position. John Deere paints everything, its engines included, in the shade of green familiar on its tractors.



Above: Something you might never have expected to find on an RT. The computerised control centre, next to the driver's cab. Relays monitor power to the engine, air pressure, electrical shift and brake pressure. The brake tanks have also been relocated inboard on the right-hand side alongside the driveline; the brakes use a split system.

THE FENTON FILE

MIKE FENTON describes one of the more unusual components of the First fleet

Because of its flexible manufacturing systems and its willingness to meet customers' detailed requirements, East Lancashire Coach Builders has cornered the UK market for new bodies on older chassis.

Sometimes this has led to complete batches of vehicles being rebodied, but more often single vehicles have been treated. A case in point is First Northampton 122, a Volvo Citybus B10M-50 double-decker.

As built originally, it had an Alexander RV coach-seated body and entered service in September 1992 with registration number K122 URP. Following accident damage, it received a new East Lancs body in 1998 and was re-registered WSU 481.

The pairing of a Pyoneer body and Citybus chassis is not unique, nor indeed was this the first example as Nottingham City Transport bought 10 new ones in 1997. But at the time of writing, this is still the only rebod. It's worth mentioning that the Nottingham examples differ by having windscreens to its specification and thus were in keeping with many of its other vehicles.

I caught up with the Northampton Citybus outside the town's Derngate Theatre on a private hire working in June last year. It had just dropped off a party of schoolchildren for a matinée performance of *Joseph and his*

Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Sadly, the colour of the show is not matched by the bus, which displays First's uninspiring Barbie 2 livery. To be fair, though, at the time it lacked the problematical magenta fade-out vinyls.



Halfcabs etcetera

JOHN G. LIDSTONE's latest update on older British buses at home and abroad

AEC

Former London Transport lowbridge **Regent III**/Weymann RLH3 (KYY 503) has vanished from its long-term resting place on the outskirts of Santa Rosa, California. It passed initially to Super, Upminster as its RLH531 (53 seats, No.1) and was exported to California in 1968 after repainting back to red. By 1973, Michael Dryhurst had seen it on a used car lot in Sherman Oaks, California, after which it migrated 500 miles north, gaining LT country area green/cream livery and correct RLH3 fleetnumber. Do you know where it is now?

Bristol

Several Lodekkas can be found in the Sacramento area of California. Ex-Hants & Dorset **FLF6B** FEL 427D is a static advertisement for Midison Mall Bingo. Ex-Mansfield District **FLF6G** 242 MNN is a mobile kitchen-cum-caravan with the Scottish Pie Company of Dixon; it attends Highland games gatherings in northern California and Nevada. Ex-Western SMT **FLF6G** B1728 (TCS 176) has a similar role with a business based in Elk Grove, but has a Caterpillar engine. A real rarity in Monterey is a semi-automatic Leyland 0.600-engined **FLF6L** — as yet

In Bulgaria, a red **VR** adorns a McDonald's restaurant between Sofia town centre and the airport. It carries Maidstone & District-style fleetnumber 5828, suggesting it is VRT/SL2 GKL 828N. Or is it a later 5828 from elsewhere in Arriva?

Guy

Mr T. D. Cole reports that ex-Lancashire United **Arab V**/Northern Counties WTE 155D features in a full-page front colour photo on a test book for students of English in Hungary. The title of the book is displayed in its indicator displays.



unidentified (only 16 were built, 11 for Hants & Dorset, five for Wilts & Dorset) — and this works 'Double Deck Adventures' and charter work with Jim Morgan there. Farther south, in the Los Angeles suburb of Woodland Hills, is an ex-United Auto **FLF6B** numbered BL1, but this is a non-runner.

Left: Former London Transport Leyland Fleetline **FE30ALR** DMS1983 (KUC 983P) in Edinburgh last November while promoting economical heating systems on behalf of Scottish Gas. The legal lettering shows the MCW-bodied bus is owned and operated by Banbury-based Reprtravel. RICHARD WALTER

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SERVICE EXTRA

Ever since I avowed in my first 'Service Extra' that I wouldn't be writing too much about my local operators, I've been talking quite a bit about them. I've rationalised this U-turn before, so won't rehearse the arguments again. But I will bring you 'More good news from the 91' — as our flagship local service has received a further enhancement.

Back in the mists of time when Woking station was served mainly by Aldershot & District and London Transport — i.e. about the time the shelters there now were erected — services to Knaphill were not that busy or frequent, or at least were no busier than others.

In recent times, the Goldsworth Park housing area was developed astride the route and this led eventually to a 10min service throughout the day and a half-hourly evening service until midnight. But the buses continued to leave from Stand 4. Now, in recognition of its frequency and importance, the 91 has been moved to Stand 1, the shortest possible walk from the station, whence many tired commuters emerge to take the service home.

I had wondered for some time when the stops would reflect the current hierarchy and now they do — a quality partnership in action. The service has also been retimed at certain hours to afford better connections with trains. It's just a pity that the trains are South West ones.

You can't escape London United's friendly drivers

While on the subject of local operators, it's a while since I mentioned my old friend London United. In 1999, my comments on its vehicles generated some correspondence but I did not say much about its staff.

Certainly, I had no reason to criticise them, although letters to *Skyport*, the Heathrow (and other BAA operations') airport newspaper, frequently detailed people's unsatisfactory dealings with certain of its drivers. I believe some staff development has been taking place recently and I wanted to record that it really shows.

Its employees were always okay, but now it is seemingly impossible to get on one of its buses without a friendly greeting from the driver. And the fleet itself has been modernised out of all recognition. The latest Plaxton-bodied Darts on the newly 24hr 285 even have digital clocks inside.

When bad news still delivers a smile

And now a word to those who still think customer service is a bit sissy and nothing to do with driving buses on Britain's mean streets while protecting

revenue. And perhaps another word to those who think you tell staff to treat customers well while displaying different attitudes to the people you're telling.

It's perfectly possible to give bad news to passengers in helpful but firm ways and I frequently see it done. I also still sometimes see it being given in cringe-making, unnecessarily aggressive and officious ways.

The best recent example of excellently handled admonishment was undoubtedly done by one of those 'outstandingly friendly and helpful' First PMT drivers I mentioned a couple of years ago. A season ticket irregularity was pointed out to a student, backed up by explanation of the possible long-term consequences, in a brilliantly skilful diplomatic way.

It's easy to be friendly and helpful on a sunny day with everything going well (but it's still good when drivers remember to do so). But it's real customer service if you give bad news and leave them smiling.

Julian Osborne gets good vibes from London United's drivers these days. Here, one of them steers Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 VA83 (V206 OOE) out of the western end of Oxford Street at Marble Arch. MARK LYONS

JULIAN OSBORNE finds plenty to praise on some of the bus routes serving his corner of south-east England

Who's going to follow the example of Hove?

It was slightly unfortunate that the illustration from the National Federation of Bus Users' Jambuster campaign that accompanied my November column was from Hove, as I understand from the press release that accompanied the photograph that the car shown was the only offending example found on the campaign's day in the new city.

Old Brighton and Hove hands will be amazed at this, but it reflects the heroic 841 parking tickets issued by the council between 1 July, when such fines were decriminalised, and that mid-October day. Well done, Brighton & Hove Council.

Would that more places were as vigilant. It was fortunate, no doubt, that the woman who had just found a nice empty bit of shading to park on in Weymouth was still in her car congratulating herself, when our First Southern National Dart swung halfway round the corner and audibly advised her why the shading was there.

She scurried off and we completed our turn. A minute later and she'd have left it and services would have been disrupted. At least she scurried off.

Another wonderful service 91

As I go to press, I have been staying with some friends who are served by another company's 91. This particular 91 uses double-deckers, charges a maximum fare of 60p and gives you full details of frequencies, fares and routings on an excellent website that also lists the many awards for management excellence, customer service and advertising flair that it has won. And it advises that it has been voted one of the Top 10 employers in the country.

Which one of those pieces of information told you that it wasn't a UK company? And yet, with its huge fleet of double-deckers, it keeps our manufacturing industry in masses of work. I'll tell you more in June 'Service Extra'.



PUBLICITY MATTERS

Moving house is said to be one of the most stressful activities in life. Finding reliable information about public transport can also be a fairly painful task and one where a little inside knowledge helps. We have recently moved to Bardon Mill in Northumberland. It is reasonably well served by the joint Stagecoach in Cumbria/Arriva Northumbria service between Newcastle and Carlisle, with an hourly service during the day, less frequent in evenings and on Sundays. The usual vehicles are comfortable Plaxton Premiere coaches in an attractive blue and white route branded livery. It may seem churlish to say so, but the standard Arriva timetable is dull by comparison.

Northumberland and Cumbria have much in common. Both are largely rural and contain a national park; both take an active public transport role, producing attractive publicity material; and the main bus operator is one of the big groups. Easy access to transport information is vital, and although the large groups are easy targets for criticism, small operators of infrequent or market day services are particularly bad at publicising their services.

It's often down to the council

With fragmentation of operators through tendering and the closure of bus enquiry offices, the county council plays a vital role in ensuring accurate and readily available information for the whole network.

Interactive journey planners can be helpful, but one has to be careful in framing the requirements. A minor difference in timing points changes the hourly 20min journey into Hexham to a once-daily two-hour marathon with a change of bus halfway. Tourist information centres are handy sources of information, but it wasn't until my third visit to Hexham's that I found a copy of the Northumberland public transport timetable (good value at £1).

Cumbria produces a free county-wide timetable, but this too was hard to come by. Of the two, Northumberland's has the edge with a simple layout and full operator details. Cumbria's doesn't have operator contact numbers and is arranged geographically so that finding, say, the service from Whitehaven to Carlisle involves looking up the service number in the index to places served, then the page number in the list of routes. However, Cumbria's map is readily available, but while Northumbria makes reference to a free map I haven't yet seen it. Why is it not issued with the timetable?

There is much that is good about transport in the area. The multi-operator Explorer North East is good value and the Northumberland timetable indicates upon which services it is valid. The Hadrian's Wall bus service is operated by Stagecoach Volvo B6s painted in a special livery and certain journeys carry a tourist guide. Sadly, last year's foot-and-mouth outbreak hit tourist-related provision hard and I have rarely seen it with more than a handful of passengers.

Two salutary warnings

If bus companies are going to devolve information to other bodies, something that makes sense in rural areas, then perhaps they should apply some quality control to those who supply the information. Two stories might illustrate this.

Stagecoach started the season last year by running an hourly service (X50) between Penrith and Keswick, overlaid on the hourly service to Workington. The X50 was withdrawn in June; the Lakeland National Park timetable contained an insert noting this, while the Cumbria timetable contained only a warning that the service *might* be altered.

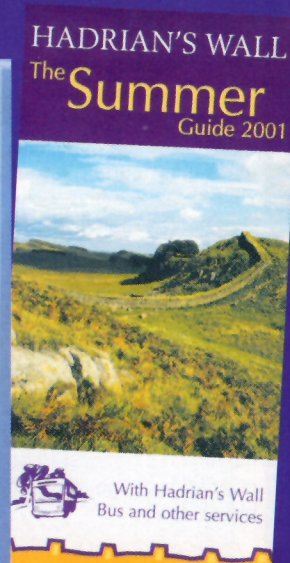
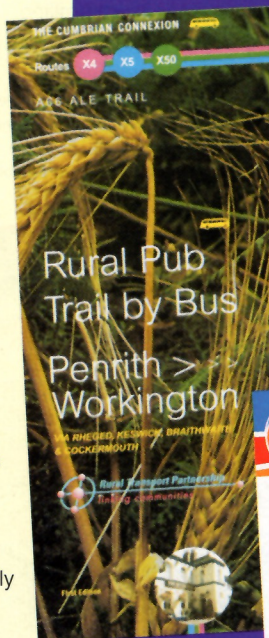
Even worse, in October I picked up a pub trail leaflet in Penrith tourist information centre still showing the X50 journeys. Still, another 30min in the pub . . .

Our local paper recently carried a letter from a shopkeeper who had encountered an American tourist who wanted to travel from Hexham to Bamburgh by public transport. The tourist centre staff were unable to help. If only they had looked in the timetable on their shelves.

JOHN CARR describes the approach to publicising tourist services in the counties closest to his new home village in Northumberland



Arriva North East 1205 (R295 KRG), a DAF SB3000WS/ Plaxton Interurban, displays its distinctive route branding as it picks up passengers in Bampton. **DAVE McALONE**



RALLY CALENDAR UPDATE

A few small, but significant changes need to be made to the information contained in our 2002 Rally Calendar, published with last month's *Buses* and still available from the back issues service in our subscriptions department (see p4 for contact details).

The venue for the Teesside Running Day on 28 April is the Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge and *not* the town hall. For further details, please contact The 500 Group on 01642 782796 (evenings) or by e-mail at davidhunter@500group.fsbusiness.co.uk.

The Science Challenge at Crich Tramway Village is on 17 March (as listed in our Museum Guide last month) and not 23/24 March.

The contact phone number for the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum is 01383 720241 and the phone/fax number for EFE Showbus International on 22 September is 01494 558147.

The organiser of the Bus of Yesteryear Rally in Staines on 11 August has asked us to make clear that although advance details are available (stamped addressed envelope, please) from 72 Hythe Park Road, Egham, TW20 8DA (phone 01784 455955), souvenir programmes are only available on the day of the event and will be on sale for £4.

Former Jones of Aberbeeg Leyland Tiger Cub/Weymann 98 (889 AAX) at last year's EFE Showbus International at Duxford. To contact the event organisers, please use the corrected phone number in this story.

MAJOR EVENTS OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS INCLUDE:

MARCH

- 23/24 Manchester.** GMTS Spring Transport Festival. Museum of Transport, Manchester.
- 30/31 Kirkby Stephen** East station yard, Market Square, Brough Sowerby and Brough centre, Cumbria Commercial Vehicle and Bus Rally.
- 31 Barking.** Bus rally, running day and transport enthusiasts' bazaar 10.30-17.00 at Barking Town Hall car park (off St Paul's Road).
- Lincoln** Lincolnshire Vintage Vehicle Society Open Day. 10.00-17.00.
- Bristol** Running Day on variety of early-1960s city and country routes, plus static display at Bristol Industrial Museum.

APRIL

- 7 Cobham** Bus Museum Cobham 2002 Annual Open Day and Bus & Coach Gathering. Gathering at the Old Runway, Brooklands.
- 13 Pudsey,** West Yorkshire Samuel Ledgard Convention, Civic Hall, Dawson's Corner, 10.00-17.00.



HELP TO SAVE A SCOTTISH VR

By joining in a full day's tour on four different Bristol VRs, you will also be able to raise funds towards the preservation of one of the few surviving former Scottish Bus Group examples.

The vehicle in question is NGM 168G, a 1969 VRT/SL/6LX new to Central SMT, but exchanged with Southern Vectis for a Lodekka FLF in the great swap between SBG and the National Bus Company in 1973/74. It is one of 44 Series 1, 2 and 3

VR school buses still operated by the Nottinghamshire independent, Johnson Brothers of Hodthorpe.

To help raise funds to preserve NGM, a tour is being run from Worksop on Saturday 13 April. For advanced bookings, please send remittance and stamped addressed envelope (cheques made payable to Johnson Bros. Tours) for £7 per person to Richard Newman, 9 St. John's Wood Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight, PO33 1HP (phone 01983 562069).

NEW OWNER FOR ULSTER TS6

One of the oldest vehicles in preservation in Northern Ireland has changed hands.

Leyland Tiger TS6 CZ 4803 is now owned by K. Alexander of Newtownards for continued preservation. This 1934 vehicle was first owned by the London Midland & Scottish Northern Counties Committee railway, whose bus interests were absorbed the following year by the Northern Ireland Road Transport Board.

The Board rebodied the 34-seat Metro-Cammell coach in 1944 as a 34-seat bus, and it survived to be included in the fleet inherited

by the Ulster Transport Authority in 1948.

In 1950, it was sold to the Londonderry & Lough Swilly Railway, where it operated for eight years before passing to Dunhallow Coaches of Boherbue, Co Cork. During the 1970s, after several years out of use, the remains were rescued by Peter McBride and brought back to Northern Ireland. It underwent extensive restoration, including reverting to NIRTB livery and fleetnumber 714, appropriate to the early postwar years. John Magill of Limavady later owned the bus.

APRIL ISSUE: PACKED WITH NEWS



£102 million facelift planned Lancashire's seaside system

Blackpool trams for scrapyard?

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Armchair, Brentford

New are RL51 DNU/V/X/Y, DOA/H/J/U, Plaxton Pointer B30D-bodied Dennis Darts SLFs in the new red livery depicted last month. Older Dart/Pointer P32 MLE joins P31 MLE with Centrebus, Leicester.

Arriva Colchester AA

Two Dennis Darts from Guildford are East Lancs B40F-bodied DS23/4 (N543/4 TPK). Thus no longer passing Geoff Mills's doorway (a new talking point, I hear) is Leyland National Greenway 3309 (NIW 6509, TEL 491R), withdrawn earlier than expected and sent to Southend for disposal. But Geoff's sadness may be relieved by the possibility of driver trainer Greenway ZDT341 (SIB 6711, HPF 310M), on loan from Surrey & West Sussex.

Other vehicles to go, delicensed, to Southend are Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 2319/20 (L613/4 LVX).

Arriva Cymru AA

Now withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz Vario 1880 (L193 DBC), the two Leyland Swifts 3302/3 (F302/3 MNK) and Leyland Lynx 4067 (F67 FKW).

Mercedes-Benz 709D MMM225 (F425 EJC) is with Beta Buses, Glasgow, MMM238 (G238 FJC) with Dickson, Paisley and MMM239 (G239 FJC) with PD Travel, Glasgow.

In anticipation of the transfer of this company to Arriva North West control, it is being renumbered for the second time in less than six months, to avoid clashes with existing North West buses. The previous renumbering was detailed in November 'Fleet News'. The changes are shown in the table below.

Vehicles not listed and therefore presumed withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander 1718 (N718 DJC), Leyland Tigers 4102 (B102 KPF) and 4207 (YPJ 207Y) and Leyland Lynxes 4299 (F299 LMG), 4304/24/40 (F304 AWW, G324 MMW, G34 MME), which have been renumbered (on paper) as 0198, 1772/71, 1718/44/24/34 respectively.

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/T/V-Z, PZB-G). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in italic type (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, VLT 48), with the most recent given first.

Arriva London AA

More Wright Eclipse Gemini H41/22D-bodied Volvo B7TLs are VLW30/2-4 (LJ51 DHK/N-P).

Dennis Darts DR20-31 (H120 THE, H621 TKU, H122-31 THE) have return from long-term loan to Connex for the G1; DR22/3/5-31 were promptly sold. Also sold are Leyland Olympian L250 (D250 FYM) and the last MCW Metrorider in the fleet, MRL129 (F129 YVP). MCW Metrobuses M1093/9 (B93/9 WUL) have been withdrawn, M704 (KYV 704X) is being used as a source for spares by the Original London Sightseeing Tour and M650 (KYV 650X) has also been sold. MCW Metrobuses M1131/3, 1281/97 (B131 WUL etc) are with McKindless, Wishaw.

Original London Sightseeing Tour

Ensign has sold AEC Routemasters ERM46-8. 163, 235 (JSJ 746-8 VLT 90, 84, 80, VLT 163, 235) and RCL2248 (CUV 248C) to Mac Tours, Cockenzie.

Arriva Midlands North AA

Volvo Citybuses 2038/40-2 (H648/40-2 GPF) have gone on loan to Arriva Merseyside for rail replacement services. Leyland Olympian 1904 (EEH 904Y) is with Confidence, Oadby.

Arriva North East/Northumbria AA

Many train services have been replaced by buses owing to driver shortages, but were due to have finished by March. Northumbria's Alnwick and Morpeth depots were covering Newcastle-Morpeth-Chathill services and this has been the most intensive bus-for-train corridor in the whole region affected. Arriva North East has provided buses for the Middlesbrough area, running as far south as York.

Northumbria has former Arriva Yorkshire Optare MetroRider MR31/B27F M752 WWR.

Optare MetroRider 2611 (P611 FHN) and DAF SB220/Plaxton Prestige 4030/59 (R430 RPY, R701 KCU) have gone to Durham County from Arriva Teesside, Northumbria MetroRiders 868/70 (M868/70 KCU) have gone to Tees & District, SB220/Ikarus 4108 (L532 EHD) in the opposite direction and 4109 (L533 EHD) from Tees & District to Teesside. MetroRiders 847/53 (J363 BNW, K853 RBB) have been transferred from Northumbria to Teesside and SB220/Plaxton Prestige 4047 (S347 KHN) and SB220/Optare Delta 4097 (G258 UVK) the other way. Withdrawals are of Optare MetroRider 928 (J715 CYM) and Optare SB220/Optare Delta 4098 (H259 CFT).

Arriva North West/Merseyside AA

Alexander Strider B51F-bodied Scania L113CRL M105 RMS was transferred from Arriva Scotland West in February.

ARRIVA CYMRU RENUMBERING

<i>North West number</i>	<i>Cymru number</i>
Mercedes-Benz 709D/711D	
0099	1799
0101-8	1725/48/63/4, 1385, 1766/7, 1117
0110-7	1394, 1711-4, 1455-7
0121/2/5/6/8	1729-31, 1707/8
0138-40/8-51/3-7/9	1768/86/70, 1119, 1773/10, 1118, 1793-7/50
Mercedes-Benz 811D	
0171-4/85-8/91-4/9	1411-3/23, 1335-8, 1881-4, 1719
Mercedes-Benz Vario	
0301-5/7-19/20-9	1801-5/7-19/29/21/92-9
0331-5/7-47	1831/26/33-5/27/39-41/28/43/4/30/46/7
0350-65	1860/56/55/78/9/62/86/7/50/48/9/58/9/63-5
0372-5/91-4	1822-5/51-4
Dennis Dart MPD	
0814-24/6	2564-70, 2269, 2394, 2553/4/6
0831-4/8/9/41-4/6-9/51/2	2271-4, 2538/9/41-4/6-9/51/2
Dennis Dart step-entrance	
1116-9/26-30/53-6	3150, 3247-9, 3676/71/82, 3704/7, 3153-6
1301-4/8-10/23/5/8	3525/6/23/4/8-30, 3823/5/38
Dennis Dart SLF (not MPD)	
2273/4	3522/58
2325/6/8/30-3/41-61	3521/2, 3848, 3560-3/71-91
Leyland Lynx	
1711-6/9/21/2/8/9	4311-6, 4249, 4641/2, 4028/9
1735-41/50-5	4350/60/90, 4038-41/30, 4334, 4254, 4073, 4654/5
DAF SB220	
1795-7/9	4025/24/47/9
2476-9 (gas buses)	4426-9
Leyland Olympian	
3007-9/12/3/7	5507/8/12/22/3/7
3021/2/6/8/9	5221/2, 5576, 5228/9
3047/51/3-5/71-3/86/91-4/6	5147/51/3-5, 5251/2, 5413, 5186/91-4/6
3062/3/5-9	5962/3/5-9
3118-22/4/7-9/31/5-7/9	5208-12, 5924, 5257/8, 5927/91/55-7/9
Volvo Olympian	
3343-9	5233-9
Bristol VRT open-top	
3988/9/91/2/8/9	6478/29, 6961, 6512/28/19
Coaches	
5003-7/9	7945/44, 7395, 7819/97, 7069
Driver trainers	
8169-77/99	8324/22/03/82/43/01/7/06/00/5

Dennis Dart 1151 is confirmed registered L151 SBG and with East Lancs EL2000 B32F bodywork. 1153-5 (L153-5 UKB) have Plaxton Pointer B20FI bodywork.

As part of the same process that has seen the wholesale renumbering of the Arriva Cymru fleet, Leyland Olympians 701-6/8/9/12/3, 0251-64 have become 3221-5, 3206/8/9/12/3/51-64, Volvo B10M-50/Alexander Q-types 778/9/85-8 have become 1778 etc, DAF SB220/Ikarus 6330-4 have become 1790-4, Dennis Dart SLFs 7872-9 have become 0802-9, Neoplan N4009 midibuses 7301-3 have become 0601-3, while open-top Leyland Atlanteans 3449 and 3551 have become 3980/1.

826-8 (E452/3/5 SON), the MCW Metrobus DR102/63/MCW H45/30F new to London Buses' Harrow Buses unit in 1987 and acquired by MTL from Great Yarmouth Transport in 1995 at the height of the Manchester bus wars, have been sold to Prentice, West Calder.

It is reported that Carlyle-bodied Dennis Darts 1135/6/8/9/42/4/6 (H95/6 MOB, G128 RGT, H458/63/6/9 UGO) have been withdrawn. Carlyle-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D 70 (G100 TND) is with Irvine, Law and Leyland Olympian/Alexander 243 (F243 YTJ) is with Avon, Prenton.

Two more Mercedes-Benz/Plaxton Beaver minibuses transferred to Arriva the Shires & Essex are 811D/B31F 116 (L776 RWW) and 711D/B29F 150 (J3 SLT).

Plaxton-bodied Darts 1177/80/2/9/90 (M177 YKA etc) have been transferred to Merseyside (St Helens) following the closure of Warrington.

Arriva Southend AA

To prevent confusion with Arriva Southern Counties' existing stock, Southend, Colchester and Grays-based vehicles have fleetnumbers officially prefixed E, but these aren't expected to be carried on vehicles. Heavy maintenance of Grays-based vehicles is to be undertaken at Southend, and they are gaining 'Arriva in Thurrock' 'descriptors'.

Just a few weeks after First Thamesway gave up operation of Green Line Southend-London coach service 721, Arriva abandoned the service altogether from 16 February, ending nearly 22 years of scheduled coach operation — Southend Transport's X1 group of services became by far the largest municipal coaching operation in the country. Now, it's all over as the company retrenches once more toward its former borough boundaries. In the last week of operation, Green Line vinyls were removed from coaches and on the last day, former Southend Transport double-deckers ran most journeys.

Substantial service changes on 17 February saw cuts to less profitable local mileage, raising adverse press comment; fortunately, local authority support has saved the full extent from being felt. Many vehicle exchanges are expected between Grays, Colchester and Southend.

New Wright Cadet-bodied DAF SB120s were stored here before delivery to East Herts & Essex, for which they were due to operate London Buses services 256 and 346.

Dennis Dart 3218 (T218 NMJ) is reported passed to The Shires & Essex — despite the Luton registration, it was new at Southend — but it was noted in use on 15 February.

Arriva Southern Counties AA

The vehicles taken over from Arriva East Herts & Essex at Grays were ECW H45/32F-bodied Leyland Olympian 5385 (B183 BLG), new Wright Cadet-bodied DAF SB120s 4500-13 (KE51 PTY/Z, PUA/F/H/J/K/O/U/V/X/Y, PVA/D/F), inadvertently recorded last month as at Harlow, Plaxton Pointer B39F-bodied Dennis Darts 3387-90 (P25-60 FPK), B33F-bodied 3400-3 (R310-3 NGM), B34F-bodied 3404-12 (P324-32 HVX), B39F-bodied 3421/3-9/31 (P421/3-9/31 HVX) and Plaxton B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 2130/4/5/7 (N910/4/5/7 ETM). These and the fleet taken over at Southend and Colchester (which we shall continue to show as separate entities) have been given E-prefixes.

Former Luckett Optare MetroRider/B31F 2102/4 (L600, 800 BUS) and B32F 2103 (L700 BUS) have been transferred from The Shires & Essex to Grays as meal-break relief vehicles.

Guildford & West Surrey's allocation at Woking is dwindling; East Lancs-bodied Dennis Darts DS23/4 (N543/4 TPK) have gone to Colchester. DSL47 (N247 VPH) is with Kent Thameside at Northfleet and DSL45/6 (N245/6 VPH) are with Kent & Sussex at Maidstone. Dart 3172 (N234 TPK) has moved to Kent & Sussex from Arriva Kent Thameside while Kent Thameside has former Guildford & West Surrey Volvo B6/Northern Counties B39F V207 (L207 YCU), Optare MetroRider 1812 (R812 TKO) has been on loan for mileage survey work from Kent Thameside, but has moved on to Medway Towns.

Leyland Lynx 3053 (H813 EKJ) sustained severe accident damage after an accident at Longfield on 7 January while Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympian 5925 (M925 PKN) has been delicensed owing to damage caused by vandals, who ran the vehicle into the canopy of the bus station at Hawkhurst. Medway Towns Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger 2172 (YSU 895) has been withdrawn.

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

Two bronze-coloured Optare Aleros, YS51 HDO/N, have arrived for Link services, serving villages in Bedfordshire.

Two more Mercedes-Benz/Plaxton Beaver minibuses transferred from Arriva North West are 811D/B31F 2406 (L776 RWW) and 711D/B29F 2420 (J3 SLT).

Arriva East Herts & Essex

The vehicles at the Grays garage which have passed from The Shires to Southern Counties control are Leyland Olympian 5385 (B183 BLG), Wright Cadet-bodied DAF SB120s 4500-13 (KE51 PTY/Z, PUA/F/H/J/K/O/U/V/X/Y, PVA/D/F), inadvertently recorded last month as at Harlow, Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts 3387-90 (P257-60 FPK), 3400-3 (R310-3 NGM), 3404-12/21/3-9/31 (P324-32, 421/3-9/31 HVX) and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 2130/4/5/7 (N910/4/5/7 ETM). Mercedes 709Ds 2128/36, Darts 3354/74/5, 3413 and Olympians 5080, 5373/86 returned to The Shires from East Herts & Essex while former Luckett Optare MetroRiders 2102-4 (L600, 700, 800 BUS) were transferred to Grays as meal break relief vehicles. Leyland Lynx 3348 (H258 GEV) has gone to The Shires and is to be converted into a driver trainer.

Arriva Yorkshire AA

A change in double-deck order is reported, to 24 Optare Spectra-bodied DAF DB250LFs, 18 for Belle Isle (to replace step-entrance Spectras on service 110) and six to Heckmondwike (for X33).

Second series repaints into corporate aquamarine have begun and a new development is of London-style advertising frames appearing on vehicle rears (First Leeds and Lothian Buses are also using them). Some single-deckers have had their offside branding removed in preparation for advert framing.

Optare MetroRider 741 (L741 PUA) is back in traffic ex-reserve, but 752 (M752 WWR) has gone to Northumbria and 730-3/51/3 (L730-3 MWW, M751/3 WWR) are withdrawn, as is Leyland Lynx 299 (F299 AWW).

Several Castleford-based Volvo B7TLs, 652-4/73 (W652 CWX etc) have been noted in ordinary non-guided busway services and without guidewheels. Lynxes 266, 321 (E266 WUB, G321 NNW) passed to Coakley, Motherwell, but 298 (F298 AWW) remains in service (and not 299 as given recently).

Arriva Yorkshire South at Pontefract currently has Dennis Darts 140-2/6/65-7/83, Volvo B10Bs 416/8-24/6-33 and MetroRider 734.

Aston, Killamarsh

Ex-Preston Bus Renault-Dodge S56/Northern Counties B22F D651, 754 YCW and B25F-bodied F90 UHG are in stock. MASS Leyland Titan NUW 652Y has been on loan for service 253.

Aztecbird, Otley

V85, 95 EAK are correctly Cspel 844s, built in Hungary, rather than pure Neoplans — like MAN/Optare Vecta L834 MWT, they are branded for service 757 (Leeds-Otley via Bradford Airport). Cspel chassis formed the basis of many Ikarus buses operated across the former Soviet Bloc.

Iveco EuroRider/Beulas Stergo S108 KJF and Ikarus-bodied DAF W219 CDN are further acquisitions.

B-Line, Kinsley, W Yorks

Optare MetroRider/B29F J700 CGK and Renault S75/Plaxton B28F J231 JJR are in stock. DAF-engined Leyland National SAE 754S has gone to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

Barnsley & District YT

Leyland Nationals here are to be replaced with 20 ex-Trent Buses Optare Delta-bodied DAF SB220s, the first being B47F 318 (K346 FAL), which ousted National 202 (EDT 202V).

Ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobus Mk2 DR102/27/MCW H43/30F NOA 462X and POG 591Y are at work. Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider 141 (G682 KNW) has been upseated to DP31F from DP29F.

Beeston, Hadleigh, Suffolk

Smart Scania N113DRB/East Lancs Cityzen DPH47/31F V335 EAK has been acquired from Kettlewell, Retford, to work alongside similar ex-Fowler S333 HEB on services 90/91 (Ipswich-Sudbury).

Out go Plaxton Supreme-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU5C/4R VAS 589T (VWS 976T) to Colchester Coaches, Clacton, similar PSU5D/4R LUA 283V to Mike Boggis, Woodbridge and Optare Delta-bodied DAF SB220 G253 EHD has gone to NIBS, Wickford.

Birmingham Coach Company, Tividale

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers J701-7 EMX have been bought from Metrobus, Orpington. 701 is DP32F, the rest B32F.

Black Prince, Morley

Scania N112DRB 307 (E307 EVW) has been operating in allover red so far this year — it received this as a base for being the 2001 Christmas bus ('News' February). This fleet has long been noted for its varied liveries. N112DRB 32 (C32 ETG) is the first in the revived Leeds City Transport identity (see 'News').

Alexander-bodied Scania 421 (F421 GWG) has been withdrawn after engine failure and blue/cream BR112DH 461 (FWH 461Y) has been sold to Aintree Coachline, Bootle. East Lancs-bodied Scania N112DH 34 (C34 ETG) was noted out of service after having suffered an attack by vandals, with several windows broken. Optare MetroRider 167 (K167 FYG) has been cannibalised on-site.

Blackburn Buses

The six Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts, 661-5/7 (PK51 LJN/O/U/V/X/Y), have arrived.

Blue Bus, Horwich

Alexander ALX200 B26D-bodied Dennis Dart T674 TSG has been acquired from Connex Bus.

Bower, Chapel-en-le-Grith

Acquisitions are of Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess B25F HUI 4891 (E433 YHL) from Stagecoach Oxford, Mercedes 811D/Wadham Stringer B31F NIL 8163 (G52 BEL) new to Yellow Buses Bournemouth but ex-Brighton & Hove, Leyland Cub ST2R/Reeve Burgess C33F LIL 2612 (G341 VHU) ex-AMR, Bedford, Scania K113CRB/Van Hool C49F B5 WER (46 AEW, K3 ACE) from High Lodge, Easter and sister B3 WER (P5 FEN) from Penn, March.

Mercedes F411 KDD, E305/8 BWL have been re-registered HUI 9144, LIL 3068 and MIL 4685 respectively.

Leyland Nationals PTT 80R, VPT 596R, Mercedes D930 ARE, TJI 8643 (A126 SNH), DAFs LIL 2512 (B232 RRU), B532 SAJ, MIL 4685, NIL 8163 and RIB 5092, Scania LUI 9144 (D662 YRP), HUI 4891, Freight Rover Sherpas D959/61 WJH, MCW Metroriders LIL 3068 (E148 NAD), E650 KYW, Renault-Dodge E186 UWF and Volvo NIL 4891 have all been sold.

Bradford Bus Company, Thornbury

Two ex-Metroliner Dennis Dart 8.5SD3010SDL/Plaxton Pointer B28F 0382/90 (J382/90 GKH) are in stock. Rental Dart SLF S783 RNE is no longer in evidence.

Brandon, Blackmore End, Essex

Geoff Mills tells me three (not two) Bristol LHS6Ls are owned — 841 BMB (OEG 289P, 896 RHA, RG 230P) new to Epsom Coaches, LXR 958 (LFG 248W) new to Southern Counties, Crawley and UIB 4589 (SFP 828X) new to Courtland, Horley.

Brighton & Hove GA

Dennis Dart 11 (N511 KCD) is in Service 7 mauve livery ex-standard red and has gained the name *Derek Jameson* previously carried by 14.

Volvo B10BLE 220 (R220 HCD) remains out of service following its engine fire — it was due to be repaired in Southampton. Optare Sigma-bodied Dennis Lance 116 (N416 MPN) has returned to Optare for rebuilding after a tree fell on top of it while operating the Park-&Ride service.

East Lancs Lolyne-bodied Tridents 803/6/9/11-13/5/20 (T803 RFG etc) have been back to East Lancs for wheelchair ramps to be fitted, making them H47/31F, or CO47/31F in the case of 820.

The last Dennis Javelin coaches in the fleet, 506/14 (MIL 9576/5, F506/5 LAP) have been sold.

Burnley & Pendle BL

Alexander B36F-bodied Volvo B6LEs 200/2/3/5/8/9/14 (P335/7/8/40/3/4/9 JND) have arrived here from Lancashire United, having been ousted from the Hyndburn Circular by new Volvo B10BLEs. They were new to Stagecoach Manchester, then went to Ribbles and are thus with their fourth operator in under five years. Leyland Olympian/ECW 2105 (JFR 5W) and Northern Counties-bodied 2147 (ANA 6Y) have gone to Lancashire United, and one-time A1 Service Roe-bodied Olympian 2901 (HSB 698Y) is here from Lancashire United.

Group codes

AA	— Arriva Passenger Services
BL	— Blazefield Holdings
DG	— DelGro
EY	— EYMS Group
FG	— FirstGroup
GA	— Go-Ahead Group
NX	— National Express Group
SG	— Status Bus & Coach Group
ST	— Stagecoach Group
WG	— Wellglade Group
YT	— Traction Group



Arriva Southern Counties has adopted this livery — reminiscent of the final version of the final version of Maidstone & District colours — for its Kent & Sussex company's Transweald-branded services 295/297. Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 3210 (P210 LKJ) pauses in Matfield, between Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone. RICHARD GODFREY

Burton, Haverhill SG

Ex-Arriva North West Volvo Citybus/East Lancs H683 GPF is in stock. Former Blue Triangle MCW Metrobuses C952/3/5 LWJ have gone to Classic, Annfield Plain.

Caelloi, Pwllheli

New DAF SB120/Wright Cadet CX51 LKO is at work in allover white and Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLF S490 MCC has been sold.

Cardiff Bus

Leyland Lynxes 231/2 (F231/2 CNY) have been reinstated. Optare MetroRider MR15 103 (L103 GBO) was also reinstated, joining 104-6 (L104-6 GBO) for a time, but all four have since been withdrawn.

Cardiff Bus is assisting with restoration of two vehicles in time for the Centenary of Public Transport this year — the former 408 (408 DBO), a 1963 AEC Regent V 2D3RA/East Lancs H35/28R owned by the Cardiff 408 Group, fully licensed as a psv and occasionally used by Leisurelink for private charters and 512 (MBO 512F), a 1968 AEC Swift MP2R/Alexander B47D, owned by the Cardiff Transport Preservation Group.

Centrebus, Leicester

Plaxton Pointer B37F-bodied Dennis Darts P31/2 MLE have been acquired from Armchair, Brentford.

Chester City Transport

Open-top city tours were due to resume on 16 March. A 48-page booklet to mark the undertaking's centenary is available at £4 including post & packing, from Chester City Transport Ltd, Station Road, Chester, CH1 3AD.

City Central, Hull

Three ex-First Mainline Dennis Dominators are at work — KKU 111/2W and MWB 856W.

Clintona, Brentwood

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Pointer 2 T451 HNH is at work as is Mercedes 709D/Wadham Stringer N837 LGA.

Colchester Coaches, Clacton

Roe-bodied Leyland Atlantean KPJ 268W has been sold for scrap.

Confidence, Oadby, Leics

An addition to the growing Leyland Olympian fleet here is ex-Arriva Midlands North ECW-bodied H45/32F-bodied EEH 904Y, which came from Ensign.

Connex Bus, London SE1

Following the end of local services in Sussex, Dennis Darts DPL1-7 (X601/2 AHE, W558 JVV, W689 TNV, S310 TMB, T418 MNH) passed to RDH Services, Plumpton. Alexander-bodied Dennis Dart DAL74 (T674 TSG) has gone to Blue Bus, Horwich. Older Darts to go are ex-Limebourne Carlyle-bodied DT25, 41 (H125/41 MOB), sold to Yeoman, Canon Pyon, Herefordshire and DF20-31 (H120 THE, H621 TKU, H122-31 THE), which have been on long-term loan from Arriva London South (originally to Limebourne) and have gone back, though most have been sold on by Arriva.

Meanwhile eight of the Caetano Compass-bodied Dennis Darts have gone on loan to Durham Travel Services' London Easylink with route 42, including DCL404/6/21/2/5/6 (T404 LGP etc). MCW Metrobuses M170, 619 (BYX 170V, KYO 619X) have returned to Ensign.

Cooper, Killamarsh

Ex-Shearings Volvo B10M-60/Van Hool Alizée C53F TXI 2426 (E623 UNE) has been acquired in damaged condition from Taylor, Tintinhull, Somerset. It has been rebuilt with the latest-style front end.

Berkhof-bodied Scania TIL 7148 has gone to a breaker after suffering accident damage.

County, Brentwood

Bristol VRT/SL3 2899 RU has reverted to its original registration, CJH 121V. Similar 2786 RU is back to MEL 561P and disposed of, as Irlizar-bodied Scania T745 JHE is now 2786 RU. Plaxton-bodied Bedford YNT 1023 RU reverted to D71 HRU before its disposal.

Crystal, Darford

Mercedes-Benz minibuses N601-7 JGP, used on London route R7, and Mobility Bus Mercedes 711D L168 EKR are for sale.

DTS London Easylink

Pending delivery of the new Scania N94UB midibuses for route 42, eight of the ex-Limebourne Caetano Compass-bodied Dennis Darts are on loan from Connex for route 42, including DCL404/6/21/2/5/6 (T404 LGP etc). To make up the rest of the requirement for the 42, other Darts have been on hire from Dawsonrentals.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham

New here are tri-axle Volvo B12M/Jonckheere Mistral 70 C32F FE51 RDO to executive specification and Scania K124B4/Irlizar Century 12.35 C49Ft Y64 HHE, YL51 ZTP.

Y64 HHE wears University of Derby livery and East Lancs Flyte-bodied B10M WJ1 9361 is in a new purple/white/yellow Dunn-Line.com scheme with sweeps of colour rather than flashes.

An acquisition is Jonckheere Deauville 45 C53F-bodied B10M L48 ORC and Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D V464 YVL has also been noted.

Eastbourne Buses

The full batch of ex-Reading/Cardiff Buses Optare Excels are 38-47 (R206-15 DKG).

Wadham Stringer-bodied Dennis Javelin 24 (J124 FUF) has been sold to Red Rose, Aylesbury.

East Thames Buses

Wright Handybus B35F-bodied Dennis Dart 9SDL3002 DWL7, 8 (JDZ 2407/8) have been acquired from London United.

East Yorkshire EY

New are Mercedes-Benz Varios 418/9 (YX51 MUO/P). The three Berkhof Axial-bodied Volvo B10M coaches, 47-9 (YX51 AXM-O), are C51Ft. Another ex-Blazefield Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 3200 III C55F is 31 (G431 MWU), which was latterly with Sovereign but new to Keighley & District.

Ex-Frodingham Coaches Volvo B7R/Plaxton Prima 92 (T649 JWB) and MAN 18.350/Neoplan Transliner 93 (Y146 HWE) have been re-registered A20, 10 EYC respectively. Ex-Frodingham Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton 417 (P174 NAK) is based at Bridlington.

Leyland Atlanteans and possibly some Bristol VRT/SL3s (around five in all) are to be converted to open-top to replace the Rotomasters this season at Scarborough. The first is MCW H49/37F-bodied Atlantean 889 (VFT 189T).

It's reported that just 21 VRs remain active — 511-4/7/9/20/3/5, 730/79/87/91/5/6, 821/35/8-40 and 995, the latter relicensed early in 2002 at Bridlington.

The only Atlanteans reported still at work are 1984 Northern Counties-rebodied PDR1A/1s 931-3 (FBZ 2931-3, SXG 48/9H, SDC 143H), Northern Counties-bodied AN68 934 (SRJ 734R), Roe-bodied 935-7 (EPH 223/9V, KPJ 284W) and Park Royal-bodied 938 (UNA 848S), but Northern Counties-bodied ANA 543/64Y, A710 LNC have been transferred from Finglands in Manchester.

VRTs 515 (PAG 515W), 790 (RUA 450W) and 799 (JYG 433V) and Atlantean 919 (NJI 1252 SXG 52H) have been sold to PVS (Barnsley) while Atlantean 902 (ANC 918T) has been sold to Carl Ireland and ex-Frodingham Scania K112/Van Hool 246 (SJI 4427) to North Eastern Bus Breakers.

Embling, Guyhirn, Cambs

A seventh Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW is PIL 6952 (VVV 948W) from C&G, Chatteris.

Emsworth & District, Hants

Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D/Autobus Nouvelle 2 R749 ECT has come from Goodyear, Barnsley and former Ipswich Optare MetroRider H226 EDX is also in stock. Former London DMS-class Leyland Fleetlines OJD 190, 213R have been part-exchanged with Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) for Leyland Titans A829/83 SUL.

Finglands, Rusholme EY

New are Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President H43/28F 1765-8 (MF51 LZW/Z, MBV/X) and Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton C49Ft 373 (MF51 MBY), in executive coach livery.

Allover white Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer Y641 AVV has been noted at work on service 49 with Finglands fleetnames in its windscreen.

Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlanteans 1750/1/4 (ANA 543/64Y, A710 LNC) have passed to East Yorkshire and accident-damaged MCW Metrobus 1729 (E477 SON) been sold for scrap. The loss of 1729 has meant Atlantean 1756 (A671 HNB) is likely to survive a little longer as a spare vehicle.

Mercedes-Benz 0.303 integral coach 361 (G39 YJA, S/A 6180) has been sold via BCA Auctions in Manchester.

First Beeline FG

Five Blue Bird 'All American RE' A3RE school buses entered service on 25 February. They are B60F and are RD51 FKV/W/Z, FLA and YS51 JVE. They are used on school services in the Runnymede area of Surrey and are based in a Runnymede Council depot in Chertsey, technically an outstation of Slough. No fleetnumbers are carried.

Former York Pullman Plaxton B35F-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs R122/30 FUP are reported to have been received from First York, along with 249 (T373 NUA), another ex-First York Dart SLF with Alexander ALX200 B37F bodywork. However LOTS reports that R122/30 FUP moved on to First Bristol without being used.

Scania K113CRB 743 (TJ1 4833, J743 TDP) is now with Billy O'Brien of Ballycogley, Wexford, re-registered as 91 WX 3839, but still wearing Green Line colours.

First Bradford FG

Renumberings are not common here. Volvo B10BLE 1074 (S657 RNA), which cannot be fitted with guidewheels, has become 902 in order to remove it from sequence 1060-87, which can be fitted with guidewheels and are intended for the new Manchester Road guided busway. 1060-73/5-87 and Volvo B7TL double-deckers 5737-69 are being fitted.

First Bristol FG

Plaxton B34F-bodied Dennis Dart P407 MLA has been received from First London. Former First Capital Leyland Olympian J151 YRM has gone to Cymru and not come here as expected.

First Calderline FG

Organisational functions of First Calderline and First Huddersfield were combined on 1 November and the effect is becoming noticeable. Halifax is now the head office for the two and vehicle loans between these fleets are becoming common.

Halifax is home to the UK's first First Student school buses, with three for a two services in the Hebden Bridge area. The buses involved are American-built rear-engined Blue Bird A3Res YS51 JVA/H/K, which are B60F, with three-plus-two seating and a decidedly non-low-floor four-step entrance. YS51 JVA carries fleetnumber S001. In an earlier system, YS51 JWH would have been a Huddersfield registration mark.

Ex-First PMT Leyland Olympians EWY 78/9Y have been numbered 5078/9. They were new to West Yorkshire PTE in March/April 1983, were withdrawn in October 1986, passed to Turner, Brown Edge as its 6 and 5 and were taken over by PMT a year later as DOG748/9, later 748/9, then moved to First Manchester as 3341/2 in March last year and then back in September to PMT. When last reported, they were still in First Manchester red and hadn't yet been used. Similar 5087 and 5105 (recently re-acquired by First Bradford) gained new numbers 5250/1 as the originals were deleted from Yorkshire Rider's computerised records.

Another Leyland Olympian transferred in from another fleet is 5274 (B46 PJA), a former First Manchester ONLXB/1R/Northern Counties H43/30F.

Ex-London MCW Metrobus OJD 857Y has been cannibalised.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 2262 (M262 VWU) has been withdrawn.

Two further Leyland Atlanteans reinstated at Halifax are AN68A/1R/Roe H43/32F 6230 (KWY 230V) last used by Leeds in November and AN68C/1R 6343 (VWW 343X) at rest in Halifax since last use to 1 September here. However, 6344/7 (VWW 344/7X) have been withdrawn and went straight to Huddersfield for cannibalisation, along with 6349 (VWW 349X). Amid all these changes, Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties 7221 (XBU 17S) was still in service on 21 February, nearly 10 months after a running day was held to mark the end of the type in Halifax.

First Cymru FG

In the event, three ex-First Capital all-Leyland H47/29F-bodied Leyland Olympians have arrived here; they are 930-2 (J149-51 YRM).

Ex-First York Dart/Pointer 2s R131/2 FUP, S140 AGR are now quoted as 674/3/5 respectively (at variance with earlier reports). Bristol VR 1992 (EWN 992W) has been reinstated and, along with the other survivor, 994 (EWN 994V), has been repainted. Regrettably, the VR only recently acquired by the Welsh Bus Museum, 990 (ECY 990V), has been destroyed by arsonists.

FLEET
FACT**Van Hool Alizée**

Van Hool ranks alongside Plaxton as one of the two main suppliers of coach bodies in the UK. It is a Belgian company, still in family ownership, which builds integral coaches and buses for left-hand-drive markets — notably mainland Europe and North America. It also builds trailers for the road haulage market. Although it has sold integral coaches in the UK in the past, most of its business here is with bodies built on Volvo, Scania and DAF chassis. The original Alizée — part of the T8 family of coaches — was introduced in 1980 and was derived from coach bodies Van Hool had been making throughout the 1970s. The completely new T9 range first appeared in 1997, with a new Alizée included in the line-up, and production of the T8 version was phased out gradually over the next three years. As well as building a wide variety of coach variants of the T8 Alizée, Van Hool also supplied a few bus-seated versions on Scania and Volvo chassis, mainly for use at airports.

Withdrawals are of Iveco 59.12 209 (K709 UTT), Mercedes-Benz 709D 270 (H880 EBX), 317 (F317 AWN) and 414/35 (F604 AWN, F749 FDV), 811Ds 327/86 (F327 DCY, H853 OWN), 447-9/52 (H993-5 FTT, H175 GTA) and 814D 344 (G344 GEP), fire-damaged Dart 617 (N617 MHB) and Leyland Atlanteans 951/8/63 (ANA 624Y, A688/94 HNB).

First Eastern Counties FG

Ten air-conditioned Plaxton Paragon-bodied Volvo B12M coaches have been ordered for the X94 (Peterborough-Lowestoft) service for April delivery.

Notable withdrawals reported by the PSV Circle are Scania L94IB/Irizar InterCentury 10/2 (P20 GRT, P26 RFS); similar 11 (P25 RFS) has already gone, after being burnt out. Also withdrawn, but at the opposite end of the age spectrum, are Bristol VRT/SL3s 212/53/62/77 (WWW 122S, PCL 253W, RAH 262W, VAH 277X), and another Dennis Javelin/Duple 300 DP48F, 508 (G708 JAH).

First Essex FG

Eastern National

Airport Buses Mercedes-Benz 709D 2617 (J617 UTW) has been withdrawn for disposal, 2626/8 (J626/8 UTW) being reallocated to Airport Buses.

Thamesway

New Optare Solos confirmed are 501-11 (EK51 KHG/H/J/L/M/O-R/T-V) for Romford contracted route 193.

Further ex-London Plaxton Pointer B40F-bodied Dennis Darts returning to stock are 974/8/9/81-4 (N974 EHJ etc), 978/81/4 still in Thamesway yellow/pink and 974/9/82/3 in yellow/red Capital livery — all are receiving Barbie 2 livery at Harris, Grays, before receipt; 974/9 have since been allocated to Stansted-based Airport Buses.

London Buses route 462 (Ilford-Hainault) is being temporarily operated using Dart 8.5SDL/Wright B26F numbered 639-45 (JDZ 2339-43/72/3), allocated to Basildon.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 314 (H317 LJN) has become a paint float vehicle and 372 (H383 OHK) a staff shuttle bus at Romford.

Now withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 355/75/80 and 2603 (H366 LJN, H386/91 OHK, H603 OVW), unused Leyland Olympian 3334 (A743 JRE) and Plaxton Supreme-bodied Bedford YMT driver trainer 9023 (NUJ 1W). However, 380 and 2605/21 are in use as temporary driver shuttle buses for the 462 operation mentioned above.

Redundant 709Ds 310/81, 2610/20/9 (H311 LJN, H392 OHK, J610/20/9 UTW) have passed to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

First Huddersfield FG

Former New World First Bus, Hong Kong Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton 3383-7 (S685 SNG, S345-8 TJX) had entered service by January but there was no sign at that time of the last of the batch, 3388. Meanwhile Ikarus B48F-bodied DAF SB220s 1201-5 (J421-5 NCP) and Northern Counties B39F-bodied Dennis Darts 3299, 3300 (M615/6 SBA) have been transferred from First York.

Scania L113CRLs 8432-7 (P432/3 RSH, R434 GSF, P435/6 RSH, R437 GSF) are fitted with guidewheels for the guided busway in Manchester Road, Bradford.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 2216/43 (M216/43 VWU) have been withdrawn.

First Leeds FG

The ex-First Capital Leyland Olympian ON2R50C13Z4/Leyland H47/29F are 5261-72 (J141-5/36, 247, 138-40/6/8 YRM). Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympian, new to Glasgow but latterly with Leicester, are due as 5328-30. In from First York are Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Roe H47/29F 5029/39/41/7 (CUB 29Y etc) and 5193 (FUM 499Y); after use by both Kirkstall and Quickstep, 5193 returned to York in January, just under a month from receipt. 5029/47 had fallen out of use in York before transfer.

Ex-First Eastern National Mercedes-Benz 709Ds J611/2 UTW have been allocated fleetnumbers 9443/4 but have remained unused at Bramley since receipt last autumn.

Cherry Row-based Volvo B7TL came off one of the guided busways in December, causing closure of the outward section from Wykebeck Valley Road to Asda approach road. Subsequently, B7TLs 5771-4 (W771-4 KBT) had their guidewheels removed and Scania L113CRL single-deckers 8404/5 (M404/5 UUB) had them refitted, thus reintroducing non low-floor buses to the guided busway, but introducing Leeds City Link-style livery to it (on 8405).

MCW Metrobus 7637 (MRJ 64W) never entered service and has been cannibalised. 7640 (SND 130X) remained in Manchester red and was not available for use by January. Un-numbered SND 131X was untouched, but SND 147X is being attended to.

Withdrawals are of Leyland Atlanteans 6212/5/25, 6327/45 (JUM 212/5V, KWW 225V, VWW 327/45X) and MCW Metrobuses 7535-7/42/9/52/66 (CUB 535-7Y, A542 KUM, A752 LWY, B566 RWY). 6215 had not been used since 3 April last year. The above losses reduce Atlantean stock to just 22.

First London FG

Deliveries continue of Marshall B24D-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs, with DM439-42/5/8 (LN51 DVO/P/R/T, DUH/V) and Plaxton President H42/23D-bodied Dennis Tridents TNL1084-99 (LN51 GME-G/O/U/V/X-Z, NRJ-L, GNY/Z, GOA, GLZ).

Orpington-based MCW Metrobus M1256 (B256 WUL) has been withdrawn.

Capital Leyland Olympians LL149-51 (J149-51 YRM) have all gone to First Cymru, while Dennis Dart L7 (P407 MLA) has gone to First Bristol. Olympian LL158 (J158 YRM) was still in service up to the end of January, though it and the other survivor of this batch, LL156 (J156 YRM) were due to go to Rotherham for allocation elsewhere in the group. Former Ensign MCW Metrobuses 107 (G107 FJW), 279/81/3/90/4 (F279 NHJ etc) and Dennis Darts 669/70/91/2/5 (J459 JOW, L670 SMC, K901/2/5 CVW) have also gone to Rotherham; 670/91/2 have since appeared with Western National. 669 has unusual Wadham Stringer Portsdown bodywork, 670 Northern Counties and 691/2/5 Plaxton.

First Mainline FG

New Optare Solo 258 (YT51 EZX) is at Rotherham.

Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobus 1963 (AUT 33Y) has entered service at Olive Grove ex-reserve (at Rotherham), but unused 1962 (ULS 637X) and Mercedes-Benz 709D 150 (H390 MAR) were towed to Olive Grove for cannibalisation (1962's engine going to 1947) . Metrobus 1902 (UKY 902Y) has also been withdrawn, for disposal.

Dennis Dominators 2220/70/8 and 2487 (NKU 220X, SDT 270Y, C487 JWE) are reinstated from reserve at Doncaster, but 2427/65 (A427 YAK, C885 JWE) have been cannibalised, the latter following a collision with a van. 2222 (SDT 222Y) has also sustained damage, but repairs were made using parts from recently withdrawn 2427 (see below). 2160, 2259, 2407/27/93 (NKU 160X, SDT 259Y, A407/27 YAK, F144 MBC) and Leyland Tiger 82 (EWR 653Y) have been withdrawn, but Dominators 2259 and 2407 have since been reinstated, while 2488 (C888 JWE) has been withdrawn to reserve.

Mercedes-Benz Vario O.810 125 (R125 XDT) is reinstated at Olive Grove, but 133 (R133 XDT) is withdrawn to reserve.

The second Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS to meet a premature end is 665 (H665 THL), withdrawn after colliding with Yorkshire Terrier's Dennis Dart 108 at Hackenthorpe; similar 644 (H644 RKU) has been relegated to reserve. The chassis of burnt-out 677 (H677 THL) has been sold, along with previously withdrawn Renault-Dodge 368 (H368 UWB) and Metrobus 1914 (A114 XWE).

At the end of January, the once-large reserve fleet had dwindled to just Leyland Olympians 2613/4/6. At that time, Leyland Tigers 81-83, Mercedes-Benz 111/33/50/86/8, Volvos 644/65, Metrobuses 192/12/6/62/3, long-stored articulated Leyland-DABs 2002-4/9/10 and Dominators 2160, 2427/65/88/93/8 were for disposal.

First Manchester FG

The four Optare Solos are B25F and are 1861-4 (MA51 AET-W). Eighteen Solos and all 60 Mercedes-Benz Citaros are being fitted with CRT exhaust traps at a cost of £100,000.

Seventy-five Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse single-deckers are due for the Commonwealth Games. They will be 711-85 (MV02 VCM-P/T/U/W-Z, VBZ, VCA/C-G/J-L, VBK-P/T/U, VBX/Y, VAX/Y, VBA-G/J, VAA/D-F/H/J/K/M/O/U, VDN-P/R/T/X-Z, VEA/B, VDA/C-G/J-M, VEF/H/K-M). Wasn't life simpler when we had registration numbers? It isn't certain whether these will remain in Manchester after the games finish.

Further First Aberdeen Mercedes-Benz O.405s transferred here are 903/9 (L503/9 KSA) with Wright Endurance B49F bodies and 931/4/45 (N531/4 VSA, P545 BSS) with Optare Prisma B47F bodies. Another ex-First Glasgow Volvo Citybus B10M-50/Alexander H47/37F is 7032 (G284 OGE); similar G282 OGE and G690 PNS are numbered 7030/47.

Notable double-deckers soon to move in the opposite direction are ex-New World First Bus Alexander H53/31F-bodied tri-axle Leyland Olympian ON3R49C18Z4 3001-10 (K481-9, 480 EUX). They are destined for First Glasgow in the summer.

Ex-Timeline Leyland Tiger TR2R62C16Z4/8/Alexander (Belfast) B55F 410 (G68 RND) has been transferred to First PMT and Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Northern Counties H43/30F 3046 (B46 PJA) to First Calderline.

Other vehicles withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess Beaver 1841/3/54 (H372/4 OHK, F257 RHK), Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 3063/6/75/102 (B63/6, 75 PJA, B102 SJA), MCW Metrobus/MCW 5033, 5122 (MRJ 33W, SND 122X) and Metrobus/Northern Counties 5201/6/8 (C202/6/8 FVU).

First PMT FG

In from First Manchester is Leyland Tiger TR2R62C16Z4/8/Alexander (Belfast) B55F 296 (G68 RND).

Leyland Leopard PSU3F/5R/Plaxton 15 (CJE 454V) has been acquired from a driver training school in Leicestershire for continued use in this fashion. It was new to Premier Travel.

Bristol VRT/SL3 628 (AHU 514V) was removed from Burslem and has gone to PVS, Barnsley (dealer) for scrap. 609 and 701 (VCA 464W, GRF 701V) are at Adderley Green and are not expected to work again, nor are Burslem's 610 (WTU 465W) and 728 (NEH 728W). The last VR on Wirral allocation is 608 (VCA 452W).

PMT-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D 342 (G342 CBF) and Plaxton-bodied 709D 439 (K439 XRF) have gone to Manchester for cannibalisation.

First Provincial FG

Withdrawals are of Iveco 59.12 229 (K710 UTT) and Leyland National 2s 408/10 (MDS 867V, SNS 827W) all after accident damage. Loaned Mainline Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger 84 (A662 KUM) was withdrawn after differential failure.

Iveco 59.12s 162 (K162 PPO), 222/34/6/8/9/41/3/5/7/50/2/6/9/62/6/7 (K703/28 UTT, K801/19 WFF, K619/22/3 XOD, K912/5/8/20/8/31 VDV, L313/7/9 BOD) have passed to Baglan Car Centre, Neath & Port Talbot (dealer) for export. 165 (K165 PPO) has passed to the Jacob's Well charity, Gosport (as non-psv) and Mercedes-Benz 703 (H783 GTA) has gone to Truck Bizz, Morestead (dealer) for scrap.

Group codes	
AA	Arriva Passenger Services
BL	Blazefield Holdings
DG	DelGro
EY	EYMS Group
FG	FirstGroup
GA	Go-Ahead Group
NX	National Express Group
SG	Status Bus & Coach Group
ST	Stagecoach Group
WG	Wellglade Group
YT	Traction Group

With one of the oldest fleets in First's Yorkshire business, First Huddersfield has been receiving some of the mid-life vehicles cascaded out of York following the virtual replacement of its fleet with brand new Volvos. Huddersfield 1202 (J422 NCP) is an Ikarus 480 Citibus-bodied DAF SB220s, new to York in 1992 and now in Barbie 2 livery. ANDY IZATT



First Southampton FG

Articulated Volvo B10LA/Wright Fusion AB55D 130 (V695 GGB) has been acquired from First Glasgow.

Leyland Lynx 1097 (D105 NDW) has been withdrawn. MCW Metrobus 529 (JHE 150W) and Leyland Atlanteans 1258/60 (YRV 258/60V) passed to Truck Buzz, Morestead, Hants (dealer) for scrap.

While the Atlanteans may be on their way out, 1264 (DBK 264W) had been repainted in Barbie 2 livery by February.

First Southern National FG

Ex-First CentreWest Plaxton-bodied Dennis Darts 233-7 (N633-7 ACF) are all at Weymouth, ousting Leyland Nationals 2927/8/32 and 9055 (DOC 44V, AFM 3W, RSG 815V, XFG 27Y). Just seven Nationals remain — 2920/1/3-6/31, used mainly on school contracts and shopper services rather than normal services.

Duple-bodied Dennis Javelin 8025 (8683 LJ) has been refurbished and is in Barbie 2 livery at Taunton. Plaxton Supreme Bristol LH 3307 (AFJ 727T) was still on schools work in January.

Mechanical problems over the winter prompted withdrawal of ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 1122 (VDV 122S) at Yeovil; up to last summer it was the regular for Sundays-only express service X77 (Sherborne-Sidmouth). Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 702/9 (H907/15 WYB) have been cannibalised at Weymouth.

Former First Bristol Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider driver trainers E815/8 MOU are still numbered 3815/8 here.

Thanks to Trevor Maton for notes this month.

First Western National FG

Ex-First London Dennis Darts K901/2 CVW, with Plaxton B35F bodywork and L670 SMC with Northern Counties B31F have arrived at Camborne.

Thamesdown Transport's Jonckheere C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 335 (M935 FHR) came on loan from 20 December.

First York FG

The two Optare Solos intended here were diverted to First Mainline as its 257/8 and so a 'new' pair will be delivered later than expected.

The fleet total has increased to 103 as four school contracts have ended up being retained, requiring five Leyland Olympians, expected to be ECW-bodied 5194-7 (A686 MWX, A599, 600/1 NYG) and 5521 (B523 UWW).

Huddersfield Leyland Atlantean driver trainer 9392 (PBP 230S) has been on loan again here and withdrawn Atlanteans 6460/2/4 are stored at Elvington on behalf of First Leeds.

Leyland National 1348 (PNW 601W) has been away to First Mainline at Rotherham for conversion into a permanent driver trainer and is renumbered 9448 for this purpose, as per sister 1372 (YFS 310W), now 9446. 1354 (UWX 90X) has been sold for preservation to a group of employees.

Inter-group transfers have taken DAF SB220/Ikarus 1201-5 (J421-5 NCP) and Dennis Dart/Northern Counties 3299/300 (M615/6 SBA) to First Huddersfield; Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 2228/30 (M228/30 VWU) to First Cymru; Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander 3373 (T373 NUA) and ex-York Pullman Dart/Plaxton 3378/9 (R122/30 FUP) to First Beeline, although 3378/9 have since been reported with First Bristol; and Leyland Olympians 5029/39/41/7 (CUB 29Y etc) and 5193 (FUM 493Y) to First Leeds, but 5193 returned to York in January. Further to last month's report, the SB220/Optare Delta transferred to First PMT was 1254 (G254 JYG).

Also withdrawn are DAF SB220/Optare Delta 1251 (G251 JYG), Dennis Darts 3207 (M207 VWW), 3302/3 (P302/3 AUM), Olympians 5038 (CUB 38Y), 5186-9 (FUM 486-9Y) and Leyland Atlantean driver trainers 9105/12 (VET 611S, XWG 627T). The Atlanteans and Leyland Nationals 363, 1321/9/56 have gone to dealers for scrap.

Ford, Althorne, Essex

ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL2 PKE 809M and Plaxton-bodied Bedford YRQ TGR 66R have been sold.

Fourways, Highwood, Essex

New here are Ikarus C55F-bodied DAF SB3000s YJ51 ELU, ENO and (to be confirmed) EKJ. ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXBs UNW 928R and GGM 106W are acquisitions from County, Brentwood.

Geldard, Leeds

MCW Metrobus OJD 873Y is numbered 306, ex-Arriva Merseyside Leyland Olympian E215 WBG becoming 309. Leyland National YFB 973V is numbered 403 and Leyland National 2 NL116HLXB/1R/DP47F VWA 34Y is also in stock. Older 406/7 (NPK 251R, LPB 213P) are understood to have been sold, 407 to Global TV & Film Buses, Batley along with 402 (MMB 975P). National OOX 815R is being cannibalised. TAE 642S and YFB 973V have DAF engines and KMA 404T has a Gardner.

Metrobus BYX 169V was bought solely for spares. Daimler Fleetline YNA 363M is also being cannibalised, but is also used as a store shed.

GHA Coaches, Corwen

Bristol VRT/SL3s BTU 364S and FFR 168S have been withdrawn.

Golden Boy, Roydon, Herts

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario W574 JVV has been acquired, but Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin N942 EWG and Mercedes-Benz M635 UCT have gone.

Go North East GA

The articulated Scania L94UA/Wright Solar Fusion ADP56D are 4950-3 (NK51 OLR/T-V). They operate service X66 (Gateshead-MetroCentre), but also appear on service 193 (Gateshead-Team Valley) on weekday evenings.

Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B43F demonstrator YN51 MGU has been received at Go-Gateshead at Sunderland Road, temporarily numbered 51 and on long-term loan from Scania, Worksop (dealer), covering for Wright Solar-bodied L94UB 4939 (NK51 OLA), which was destroyed in an arson attack on a dealer's premises on its delivery run. Another 4939 is expected. Apparently in connection with this same mishap, Plaxton Prestige B40F-bodied DAF SB220 R33 GNW returned in December from Arriva Bus & Coach, Gomersal (dealer).

While these demonstrators have been added to fleet strength, Wright Eclipse-bodied Volvo B7L 4874 (Y814 BOJ) has returned to Volvo, and was on loan to Midland, Auchterarder in late-January.

Dennis Tridents 3890/1 (NK51 ULT/U) have been transferred to Go-Coastline at Percy Main (from Go-Northern at Chester-le-Street) and are expected to be prepared as dedicated DFDS ferry buses. 3881 is registered NK51 UCH and Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart 519 is NK51 MKA.

MCW Metrobus 3765 (C765 OCN) has been repainted into a prototype schoolbus livery with lower panels in blue and red with the rest of the body in yellow. A dot-matrix display has been fitted to its rear window.

After withdrawal, Plaxton Premiere-bodied Volvo B10M-60s 7052/3 (K2, 3 VOY) were re-registered K589/8 SUP. Borrowed Oxford ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians WWL 208X and CUD 223/4Y have been returned. Leyland National 2 4675 (UJR 675V) is allocated to the driver training school at Sunderland Road.

Withdrawals are of Leyland Olympians 3612/4/21/80 (SJR 612/4Y, A621 BCN, BYX 236V), MCW Metrobuses 3769/87 (C769/87 OCN) and latest Wright-bodied Darts to go are 8032/7/57/8/66-73/5 (J632/7 KCU, K857/8 PCN, K366-73/5 RTY).

Optare MetroRider 338 (J938 JJR) is now with Waterson, Hemsworth, 346 (J946 JJR) with Tyrer, Trawden; Dart 8001 (J601 KCU) is now with Safeway, South Petherton, 8023/8/33 (J623 KCU etc) appropriately with Dennis's, Dukinfield, 8031 (J631 KCU) with Dent, North Kelsey and 8050 (J950 MFT) with Hawkes, Waunarlwydd.

Hackney Community Transport

Two Optare Alero B12F, YL5 XCT, XEG have been received for the South Islington Plusbus service.

Halifax Joint Committee, Halifax

Another MCW Metrobus is DR101/17/MCW H43/28D B162 WUL from Arriva London. The point has now been reached where all services are operated by Metrobuses, several of which are newer than those recently acquired by major operators in the same area.

Proprietor Tony Blackman tells me that ex-Sheffield AEC Bridgemaster 1925 WA belongs to his youngest son, Lance, who is training as a mechanic. It is being restored with a Class VI certificate to allow it to operate on vintage running days along with remaining AEC Routemaster 214 CLT, ex-Hebble AEC Regent V LJX 198 and the ever-faithful ex-Halifax AEC Regent III BCP 671. Former Halifax Regent V LJX 215 is also en-route to a new Class VI certificate, its MCW bodywork having not kept up with the pace of things quite as well as its chassis.

Harrogate & District BL

A Volvo B7L demonstrator is expected. The Dennis Javelins are seeing restricted use, only one or two operating on any one day. Mercedes-Benz 811D 413 (H413 FGS) has been sold to York City Rugby Club.

Hawkes, Waunarlwydd, Swansea

Wright Handybus-bodied Dennis Dart J950 MFT is in stock from Go-North East and is used on City Connection service 98 (Swansea-Gorseinon).

Holmes, Clay Cross

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario PO51 WNP is in fleet livery of navy blue, orange and turquoise stripes in place of overall white. It usually works Matlock town service 157, part of the Hallmark network. White Optare Solo X537 NWT usually works service 158 and carries Hallmark lettering and logos.

Hornsby, Ashby, Lincs

Plaxton-bodied Dennis Y39 WVL is confirmed as a Super Pointer Dart.

Hunts, Alford, Lincs

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10Ms 3275, 6815 FH are at work and Wright Nimbus-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds NDZ 7934 and K424 ARW have been acquired to replace Renault S75/Wright HDZ 5416/68.

Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D/Plaxton CheetaH 5611 FH (W638 MKY) carries a commemorative livery to mark 70 years of operation.

Bristol LH6L XFW 951S has been withdrawn along with Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard GMS 829S.

Jowitt, Tankersley

DAF SB220s are being sought to replace remaining Leyland Nationals. The latest is allowor white Ikarus Citibus DP44F-bodied J803 KHD from Arriva Bus & Coach (dealer), Gomersal; it joins J805 KHD, L517 EHD and PIL 9729.

Leyland Nationals remaining are AOL 12/4T, OOX 822R and TVP 848/50S. Withdrawn ROK 473M remains intact but OOX 806R, AOL 10/5T and DOC 49V have been cannibalised. Leyland National 2 DOC 51V has been sold for preservation.

JP Travel, Middleton

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B24F J376 GKX has been acquired from London United and Carlyle B28F-bodied G37 TGW from Stagecoach London.

Go North East's answer to First's yellow school buses is MCW Metrobus 3765 (C765 OCN), repainted into this more yellow version of its standard livery and fitted with additional front and rear lights and a rear dot matrix destination display.

ALEX HORNBY



K-Line, Honley, W Yorks

Acquisitions are of DAF SB220LC550/Ikarus DP42F J804 KHD, previously on loan, and DP44F-seated J805 KHD. SB220/Northern Counties P905 PWW has returned to Arriva Bus & Coach, Gomersal (dealer).

Keighley & District BL

In stock from Burnley & Pendle is Dennis Javelin 11SDA2133/Plaxton DP47F 162 (L101 SDY). It arrived in all-over white and is now in Eclipse Training livery. Ownership may be shared with Harrogate & District.

The return of driver training Leyland Olympian 937 (BPF 137Y) to passenger use has been delayed owing to a wait for parts.

Kent County Council

Leyland Titan TLXB2RR/Leyland H44/26D A857 SUL is in stock from Stagecoach Selkent.

Kinchbus WG

MAN 11.190/Optare Vecta B40F 811 (M811 PRA) has been transferred from Trent Buses while Mercedes Varios 827/8 (R827/8 WBC) have gone to Trent. Optare Delta 346 (K346 FAL) has been sold to Barnsley & District.

Konect, Saham Toney Norfolk

The first new buses for this fleet are 9.2m Optare Solo/B33F 900/1 (VX51 RHZ, RJZ) for Dereham town services.

Now withdrawn are Optare MetroRiders 935/43 (J935/43 JJR). Leyland National 143 (TAE 643S), also withdrawn, is being held in reserve.

Lancashire United BL

Apart from late arriving 1093, all new Volvo B10BLEs 1079-95 are in service at Blackburn, 1084-95 route-branded for the Hyndburn Circular group.

In from Sovereign Buses (London) are Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver 457/8/60/1 (M457 UUR etc).

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW 2105 (JFR 5W) and Northern Counties-bodied 2147 (ANA 6Y) have come from Burnley & Pendle, while Alexander-bodied Volvo B6LEs 200/2/3/5/8/9/14

(P335/7/8/40/3/4/49 JND) and Roe-bodied Olympian 2901 (HSB 698Y) have gone the opposite way.

Olympian 2143 (A143 MRN) has been painted yellow with black relief for use as part of the newly created school bus fleet here.

Withdrawals to record are of the last Leyland Nationals in the fleet, National 2 895 (CEO 720W) new to Barrow and 905 (MDS 866V) new to Central Scottish. 895 is now in the care of the Barrow Transport Group, while 906 has passed to MASS Transit along with similar 344/85/96 (XRN 44V, RRM 384X, WAO 396X).

All Mercedes-Benz 709Ds were due to have been withdrawn by mid-February, as the entire minibus fleet is to have automatic transmission in future — Varios 668/9/71 are to be equipped with Allison automatic gearboxes. Accordingly, Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 640/2 (N451/3 VOD) have been withdrawn, along with Alexander-bodied Dennis Lance 183 (J103 WSC) and ECW-bodied Olympians 2118/25/35 (OFV 18X, SCK 225X, CWR 525Y).

Leisurelink (Wales), Cardiff

Leyland Leopard PSU3C/4R/Plaxton Supreme III Express C51F WTG 902T has been acquired from Thomas, Porth — it was new to Cardiff City as its 2, then passed to Cyril Evans, Senghenydd and thence Sunline, Radyr.

Leon, Farningley

A recent acquisition is DAF SB3000/Van Hool Alizée C55F 162 (HKZ 1330) from Arriva Bus & Coach, Gomersal (dealer).

Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlantean 154 (A730 LNC) has been equipped as a towing-bus to replace withdrawn Gardner-engined ECW-bodied Leyland Fleetline 139 (ASA 26T).

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian 159 (JTY 394X) is back in service after accident damage repairs.

Rare Van Hool-bodied Leyland Royal Tiger 122 (C171 AWK) is due for early withdrawal and Leyland Lynx 130 (F101 RTR) is in process of being scrapped (this pair is also reported sold to a Bolton dealer).

Lodge, High Easter, Essex

Ex-Stagecoach Oxford Mercedes-Benz 811D/Carlyle B33F G833/6 UDV, new to Bayline, have been acquired. Van Hool T815 integral SIJ 8661 (*G103 C/JN*) is now under the lead of the Essex Dog Display Team and Autobus Classique-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814D K317 EJV is with Edwards, Tiers Cross, Haverfordwest.

London Central/ London General GA

Fleetnumbers have been allocated to the considerable number of new buses on order. The Red Arrow Mercedes-Benz Citaro artics, which are unlikely to be seen before May, are to be MAL1-31. The East Lancs-bodied Volvo B7TLs will be EVL1-52 (one of these was noted on test during February), the Plaxton-bodied B7TLs will be PVL250-312 and the Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied B7TLs will be WV1-27.

Plaxton B29F-bodied Dennis Darts LDP149-52 (Y849/05/51/2 TGH) were delivered to Camberwell in January, having been stored by TransBus. It was not clear at the time of writing whether they would be re-registered before entering service. Volvo Olympians NV30-2, 40/1 (N530 NHG etc) have returned from loan to Metrobus. The other seven there, NV8-10, 33/5/7-9/42, remain on loan. Also delivered is a one-off Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse single-decker, VWL1, though we do not yet have the registration.

Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Citybuses VC10/5-9 (G110/5-8 NGN; 619 DYE, *G119 NGM*) have been sold to Pete's Travel, West Bromwich, with more expected to go the same way. Leyland National Greenways GLS463/6 (GUW 463/6W) have gone to follow Go-Ahead subsidiary Aviance, at Dublin Airport and Optare MetroRiders MRL225/37 (K425/37 HWY) have gone to TM Travel, Old Tupton.

Also sold are MCW Metrobuses M293, 845, 944, 1264 (BYX 293V, OGG 708Y, A944 SUL, B264 WUL). Wright-bodied Dennis Dart DW132 (K132 LGO) has gone to St George Travel, Washington, Tyne & Wear.

It is reported that a four-cylinder Cummins Euro 3 engine may shortly be fitted to a Routemaster.

London United

Wright Eclipse Gemini H41/23D-bodied Volvo B7TLs VR226-8 have been registered BD51 YCR-T. Although these are for evaluation, orders have been placed for 63 Alexander ALX400-bodied Dennis Tridents.

The MAN 11.190/Optare Vectas, MV1-8 (N281-8 DWY), have been withdrawn, as have numerous Reeve Burgess or Plaxton-bodied Dennis Darts, DR4 (H104 THE), DR55/9 (J655 XHL, J159 GAT), DR64/5/8/9, 75 (J364/5/8 GKX), DR102/7/10/1/28/30/5/8-41 (J102 DUV etc). DR4, 55/9, 64/5, 102/30/8/9 have been advertised for sale. Similar DRL100 (ALM 2B) has reverted to its original registration, K210 SAG, while DR98/9, 131 have been reinstated. DR76 (J376 GKX) has been sold to JP Travel, Middleton, Manchester, and Wright-bodied Darts DWL7, 8 (JDZ 2407/8) have gone to East Thames Buses.

MCW Metrobuses withdrawn are M835/41, (OJD 835/41Y), M1010/5/6/23/7/30, (A710 THV etc), M1178/84, 1200/38 (B178 WUL etc), M1374 (C374 BUV). M1194, 1368 (B194 WUL, C368 BUV) have been sold.

Low Fell, Gateshead

Latest acquisitions here are of Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander AM B31F M196/7 SRR from Nottingham City.

M&H, Denbigh

Renault/Rohill Harrier B16F GN51 YHF is at work on Rhyl Park-&-Ride service 99 (Saturdays only).

Marchwood Motorways, Totton

Eight Wright Cadet B39F-bodied DAF SB120s are due for delivery in the autumn and for Southampton city routes 18/19, which are operated under a franchise agreement with Solent Blue Line.

MASS Transit, North Anston

More acquisitions for Lincoln are ex-Arriva Cymru Leyland Lynx B49F G35 VME, ex-Road Car Lynxes E259/64 TUB, latterly with The Eagle, and Plaxton C50F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH FIL 3452 (*B104 L/JU*) from Arriva Fox County, which is being refurbished. Ex-Appleby Leyland National 1351/1R/B50F MIL 5582 (*TOE 486N*) was also acquired, but quickly withdrawn. Ex-Lancashire United Leyland National 2 B48F MDS 866V, B52F XRN 44V, WAO 396X and DP52F RRM 384X have also been acquired with the intention of using them for spares, but they may have seen some use.

Rental Dennis Dart SLFs S395-7 HVV, S720/4 KNV and T446 EBD have also been in evidence.

Leyland Titans gaining fleetnumbers are 5136/66 (A636 THV, CUL 186V), 5310/27 (KYN 310X, KYV 327X), 5822 (RYK 822Y). Titans 5013/5/32/5, 5456, 5513/37/50 and 5949/60 are based at Lincoln, though fleetnumbers do not appear on Lincoln vehicles, and they were all still in London red when last reported. 5625 (NUW 625Y) has been on loan to Aston Express, Killamarsh.

Metrobus, Orpington GA

Further new East Lancs Lolyne-bodied Dennis Tridents are 424/6-8 (LV51 YCK/M/N/O). Five of the Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties on loan from London Central, 870-2/80/1, (N530-2/40/1 NHG) have been returned. 868/73/5/7-9/82 (N528/33/5/7 LHG, WLT 688, N539/42 LHG) remain here.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers 701-7 (J701-7 EMX) have been sold to Birmingham Coach Company and Optare MetroRider 902 (N902 HWY) has gone to Red Rose, Aylesbury. Leyland Lynx 103 (D103 NDW) has also been sold.

Metroline DG

Ten 9.3m Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs are on order for spring delivery, for route 206.

New are Plaxton President H43/24D-bodied Dennis Tridents TPL237-42 (LN51 KXP/R-Z, KYA). VPL-class Volvo B7TLs displaced by the TPLs are going to Holloway first, settling in train a multiple cascade from mid-February. These will nominally replace TP-class Tridents on route 134, the Tridents in turn being used to convert route C2 to double-deck operation. DLD-class Dennis Dart SLFs displaced from route C2 are destined for Edgware, ousting EDR-class step-entrance Darts from routes 288 and 303/305.

Spare MCW Metrobuses will be used at Harrow Weald initially for the take-up of route 263 contract and also if there is shortage of TPLs at Potters Bar.

All AEC Routemasters are being equipped with four-camera closed circuit television surveillance systems, including a lower saloon screen to show adverts and, intermittently, views from the on-board cameras.

Metrobus M91 (WYW 91T) passed to Coakley, Motherwell, M1149 (B159 WUL) to McKindless, Wishaw and M800 (KYX 800X) to TM Travel, Old Tupton. Dennis Darts DRL26/7/9, 33 (K826/7 NKH, K429/33 OKH) followed DR81/6, 90/2/6/7, 144-8 to Holt, Bolton (dealer). Marshall Minibus MC1 (P481 HEG) has returned to Dawsonrentals.

Metrobuses M5 (THX 105S) and M995 (A995 SYF) have been on loan to Wallace School of Motoring, Wembley.

Midland Rider

F286 AWW is another ex-Arriva Yorkshire B49F Leyland Lynx acquired via Ensign.

Group codes

AA	— Arriva Passenger Services
BL	— BlazeField Holdings
DG	— DelGro
EY	— EYMS Group
FG	— FirstGroup
GA	— Go-Ahead Group
NX	— National Express Group
SG	— Status Bus & Coach Group
ST	— Stagecoach Group
WG	— Wellglade Group
YT	— Traction Group



The more common version of Go North East's livery is carried by Wright Handybus-bodied Dennis Dart J950 MFT, seen in service in Swansea with Hawkes, Waunarlwydd. T. S. POWELL

Mitcham Belle

Delivery has started of 16 Caetano Nimbus B31D-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs; three noted are KM51 BFLU/X, with BFLU/X numbered 054/6 respectively. Previously Mitcham Belle has not used fleetnumbers but Dart/Plaxton W124 WGT has been noted numbered 030. BFL is in standard red/white/blue livery, but 054/6 seems to be taking London's 80% red rule literally, with fleet livery on the front and the rest in red.

Moxon, Oldcotes, Notts

Bova Futura FHD12.360/C49Ft Y662 HWY was new here and joined recently acquired Bristol LHS6L/Plaxton Supreme IV C35F PAF 162X, the latter supplementing twin ESU 815X, an uncommon pair these days.

Leyland Atlantean AN68/2R/MCW VFT 195T is also at work here.

NIBS, Wickford, Essex

An acquisition is DAF SB220/Optare Delta B49F G253 EHD from Beeston, Hadleigh, Suffolk.

Nottingham City Transport

New vehicles again dominate this month, with receipt of Optare Excel 2/B39F 551-6 (FD51 EYT-Y) in Orange Line colours.

Articulated Scania 701-3 operate Lime Line services to Arnold and further examples of this type are on order.

The Plaxton Verde-bodied Scania N113CRB, 761, is in a modified green/cream livery with lower case NCT logo.

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 67 (M667 JFP) has been renumbered 967, while Volvo B10M coach 798 (P168 ALJ, A8 XCL) has been re-registered 65 RTO.

Leyland National 2s 714/24 (B714 LAL, C724 MRC), recorded as withdrawn some time ago, remain in use as driver trainers, the latter apparently permanently converted with appropriate lettering.

Wadham Stringer-bodied Mercedes-Benz 144 has returned off-loan to Barton Buses and has been withdrawn. Compass, Worthing has Mercedes 811Ds 83, 96, 181/5-8 (M983/96 CYS, J181 CRB, K185-8 HTV) and 811D/Alexander 196/7 (M196/7 SRR) are with Low Fell, Gateshead. More vehicles sold to Ramm, Sudden (dealer) are 709D/Alexander 2, 29 (M665 JFP, M453 LJF), 811D/Alexander 198 (M198 TNU), Leyland Tiger/Duple Caribbean 784 (B784 JAU), 709D/Reeve Burgess 965 (G165 RRA) and 709D/Plaxton 968 (J168 CTO).

Leyland Lynx LX112L10ZR1R/B49F 742 (F742 HRC) is another to have gone to Bus Eireann as a school bus.

Notts & Derby WG

Trent Dennis Lance/Optare Sigma 355 (M355 PRA), which had been a driver trainer, is in service. It and 357/9/62 are all in Notts & Derby livery. Leyland National 524 (FRA 524V) has been withdrawn.

Olympian, Harlow

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Dormobile H35 DGD ex-SM Travel and Alexander-bodied G111 PGT from Wycombe Bus are in use on town service OC2.

Oxford Bus Company GA

Unusually two secondhand buses have been acquired. They are 647/8 (L52/3 UNS), Northern Counties B51F-bodied Volvo B10Bs ex-Whitelaw, Stonehouse. Marshall B36D-bodied Dennis Darts 509/13/14 (M509/13/4 VJO) have gone to a dealer in part-exchange.

Olympians 208/23/4 (WWL 208X, CUD 223/4Y) are back from Go North East.

Patron, Mansfield

Ex-New World First Bus tri-axle MCW Metrobus F164 UJN is in use.

Pete's Travel, West Bromwich

More expansion is in the offing here, with 30 Volvo double-deckers on the way. At least 10 are ex-London General B10M Citybuses with Northern Counties H45/37D bodies, and G110/5-8 NGN, 619 DYE (G119 NGN) arrived during February.

Phoenix Student Travel, Chelmsford

A useful update, courtesy of Essex Bus News. Current fleet comprises:

First Essex Bus-operated:

Dennis Dart 5000 (H116 THE), Leyland Olympian 5001-5 (JTY 371/82/95, 400X, XWY 478X), Leyland Lynx 5011 (G473 DHF)

Ensign, Purfleet-operated:

Leyland Tiger 5008 (E275 KEF), Lynx 5009/10/2 (F237 CNY, G434 FVX, F240 CNY), Olympians 6000-12 (C807/11 BYY, C62/4, 82/6, 92, 66, 94, 109/10/06/28 CHM).

Plymouth Citybus

Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart demonstrator SN51 UCE has been on loan, temporarily numbered 200, and used on service 25A. Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 234/5 (K234/5 SFJ) are with First Stop, Renfrew.

Powell, Hellaby, S Yorks

An acquisition is Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere 350 L299 KKW.

Allover white rental SLF/Wright T441 EBD has been in use for a second time here recently. A rather basic single-door conversion has been made to MCW Metrobus 605 (GYE 605W) with the whole door area panelled in.

Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger FIL 8368 (A579 KVVU) and Wadham Stringer-bodied Dodge E204 AKU were offered for sale at BCA auction in Manchester.

Price, Wrexham

Ex-Arriva Midland Red North Leyland Olympian EEH 907Y has been acquired and was being repainted before use. Two other double-deckers are operated — Olympian GFM 110X new to Crosville and Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Atlantean SND 495X from Greater Manchester.

Pulham, Bourton on the Water, Glos

History has been made here with the very last Volvo B10M bodied by Plaxton. VU51 FGN has a Prima C57F body.

RDH Services, Plumpton, E Sussex

Following the cessation of Connex Bus's services in Sussex, its Plaxton Pointer B39F-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs, X601/2 AHE, W558 JVV, W689 TNV, S310 TMB, T418 MNH have been acquired.

Reading Buses

DAF DB250/Optare Spectras 704-6 have the new white/blue livery only temporarily until brand new Spectras arrive. After initial concerns over recruitment of sufficient drivers for the night network, there is now a waiting list to join it.

The first ex-Eastbourne Spectras delivered were 713 (S881 BYJ), after repaint there, followed by 712 (S880 BYJ).

Reserve MCW Metrobus 183 (HCF 183W) has re-entered service on return from loan to Weavaway.

Optare MetroRider 609 (J609 SJB) is with the West Berkshire Council for its Downlands Project, in a blue and yellow livery. It visits rural areas to distribute advice and leaflets.

Red Rose, Aylesbury

Optare MetroRider N902 HWY has been acquired from Metrobus, Orpington, while J124 FUF is an ex-Eastbourne Wadham Stringer B55F-bodied Dennis Javelin.

MCW Metroriders F160 AWO, F195 YDA and Optare StarRider G105 KUB have been disposed of, as have Ford Transits D124 PTT, M853 RNG and N539 DNW.

Regal Busways, Newhaven

Regular correspondent Lee Whitehead recently left Connex Bus to buy and run this fleet, which comprises ex-Brighton East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlanteans 5, 54, 64 (TYJ 5S, JFG 354N, OYJ 64R) which came respectively from Style Travel, Newcastle; a private owner and Rennie, Dunfermline, East Lancs-bodied Dennis Dominator 16 (OAP 16W), also ex-Brighton and previously with Nostalgiabus, Mitcham; ex-London MCW Metrobus 140 (BYX 140V) from Connex, and ex-South Yorkshire PTE Leyland Fleetline/Alexander 1557 (SHE 557S) from Isle, Oswestry Ferry.

Three minibuses, probably Optare MetroRiders, are due in March to operate two routes in the Chelmsford and Harlow areas on behalf of Essex County Council, starting on 2 April.

Road Car YT

Further MCW Metrobuses acquired from Travel West Midlands are DR102/27/MCW H43/30F 760/2/84/6 (NOA 450/62X, POG 584, 486Y). The next source of used buses is to be Trent, with four DAF SB220/Optare Deltas due.

ECW-bodied Leyland Atlantean 1372 (TRN 472V) and Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopards 1419/39 (JFW 915T, YSF 89S) have been reinstated for further service.

Several of the vehicles acquired from The Eagle had their seating capacities changed before Road Car acquired the company's bus operations. Leyland National Greenway 261 (AFM 1W) is B51F ex-B48F, 262 (NOE 595R) is B51F, ex-B52F and 263 (CWX 669T) is B48F ex-B52F. Mercedes-Benz 811D 392 (F834 RVL) is B31F ex-B26F. Wadham Stringer-bodied Leyland Tiger 431 (HFU 531) is DP55F ex-DP54F. East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlanteans 715/45 (WCK 215Y, GFV 155W) are H50/39F (ex-H50/36F) and Metrobuses 752-4/6 (BOK 22V, KJW 313/23W, LOA 416X) are H43/33F ex-H43/30F.

Ex-Eagle Leyland Lynxes 264/9 (E264/59 TUB) have been sold to MASS Transit, and were re-seated from B49F to B51F, while Mercedes 811D/Optare StarRider 393 (E283 TWW, 7980 F) has been withdrawn.

Further Atlanteans withdrawn are East Lancs-bodied 702/4/7 (KCK 202/4W, URN 207V) and Northern Counties-bodied 1334/41/6 (LEO 734Y, ANA 601, 546Y).

Fire-damaged Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger 465 (ESK 965) has gone to Potts, Grimsby (dealer) for scrap.

Ross, Featherstone

Optare MetroRiders L102 GBO and L197 DDW are numbered 6 and 7. Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRiders 6, 7 (F909 YWY, F33 CWY) were sold recently via BCA Auction in Manchester.

Rossendale Transport

More new Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs B37F are 136-40 (PF51 KMM/O/U/V/X).

Safeguard, Guildford

New Optare Alero/C16F YL51 ZTK entered service in January in all-over white.

My good friend Huw Jones (and also correspondent Richard Kirwin) advise that 1956 AEC Reliance/Burlingham B44F 200 APB has been re-acquired from Rexquote Heritage, Bishops Lydeard. Currently it wears the livery of Safeway, South Petherton, which acquired it from Safeguard back in 1962; it is to be restored to Safeguard livery — it was bought new and was the first of 16 Reliances operated by Safeguard.

The last-ever Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M has gone to Cotswold operator Pulham, Bourton-on-the-Water. VU51 FGN has a 57-seat Prima body and joins a fleet in which all but two of its full-size coaches have Plaxton bodies. The exceptions are two Volvos with Van Hool Alizée bodies.

PLAXTON



Neoplan N722/3/Plaxton Paramount 4000 CH53/19Ct WPF 926 (SWN 159, C358 KEP) has been replaced by acquired Neoplan Skyliner FXU 355.

Sanders, Holt, Norfolk

Further Leyland Olympians are ex-Stagecoach London ECW H42/26D-bodied C10 BYY, C75, 118 CHM, and former Arriva Midlands North ECW DPH42/28F-bodied B912 NBF.

Sea View, Poole

This is the first operator to order the new DAF SB4000PF; three are due to replace the last Leyland Tigers in the fleet in April. They will have the first Van Hool bodies for the company, one C53F and two C51Ft.

Shire Coaches, Park Street, Herts

New here is Ayats C49Ft MU51 FMC, which replaced Iveco/Beulas EuroRider 35 R503 SCH. An acquisition for school contract work is MCW Metrobus A913 SUL from Camden, West Kingsdown, currently allover white.

Silcox, Pembroke Dock

A new, unregistered Plaxton Panther-bodied Dennis R-series has arrived and is receiving fleet livery. Former White Rose, Thorpe V676 DPO, a Caetano Compass B44F-bodied Dennis Dart SLF, has also been acquired.

Marshall-bodied Leyland Tiger 20 KB 53 is another ex-Ministry of Defence example acquired and is being converted to a 71-seater with three-plus-two seating.

Skills, Nottingham

All Setra S250s in stock are reported to be replaced by more S315GT-HDs. Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10Ms 95/6/8 (JUI 6153, G553 RRR; F46 LCH; N43 ARC) have been withdrawn and sold as has 'luggage bus' Leyland National ACH 510T new to Trent.

SM Travel, Harlow

Leyland Titan LUI 5578 (GYE 266W) and MCW Metrobus GOG 95W are in stock, these and MCWs KJW 318W and KYV 677X being painted red and used on schools work as well as town service S20.

Sovereign London BL

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver 457/8/60/1 (M457 UUR etc) have gone to Lancashire United.

Stagecoach East ST

I'm using revised sub-titles this month, in line with new-style reports received — in particular, with thanks to regular correspondent Nigel Diplock.

Cambridge/Peterborough

In from Cheltenham & Gloucester are Volvo B6/Alexander B40F 432/3 (L837/8 CDG) at Cambridge. Withdrawn Optare MetroRider 964 (K964 HUB) has been reinstated at Peterborough. 966 wasn't loaned to Stagecoach South Midlands; it was used to convey Cambridge-based Nigel Diplock to Oxford so he could collect Oxford MAN 915 for trials in Cambridge.

No MANs are based at Peterborough — reports suggesting 31/2 being there were incorrect, emphasising the importance of checking before you submit a report, please. However, five more MAN 18.220/Alexander ALX300 are being introduced to Cambridge to replace ex-Manchester Volvo B10BLE/Northern Counties Prestige B43F 301-5 (P601-5 JBU) on Park-&-Ride services. The Volvos are going to Busways in exchange for the MANs, starting with 42 (S459 OFT), which was repainted green/cream before collection from Newcastle.

Leyland Olympian ONLXCT/1RH/Optare DPH43/27F 500-2 (E500-2 LFL) and ONLXB/1R/Roe H47/29F 503 (UWW 3X) have gone to Stagecoach Cheltenham & Gloucester. This finally makes clear that 503 was not sold to Confidence, Leicester.

United Counties

Volvo Olympians 526/7 (P526/7 EFL) have gone to Northampton and Bedford respectively and Mercedes-Benz 709D 962 (K358 ANV) has also gone back at Northampton. The transfer of 961 (K355 ANV) from Peterborough back to Corby has again taken the last Mercedes from Peterborough. Northampton/Bedford Mercedes-Benz 358 (K358 ANV) has returned home, but is in reserve.

The ECW H45/32F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs from Stagecoach Midland Red have been numbered 521/2 (A546/7 HAC). They are at Corby and Kettering respectively.

Stagecoach East Midlands ST

Inter-group transfers unite Busways' Dennis Lances with the nine East Lancs-bodied examples already at Grimsby-Cleethorpes. They are Plaxton Verde B49F-bodied 21-3 (M201-3 DRG) and Optare Sigma B47F-bodied 24 (M204 DRG). Contrary to last month's report, these are not at Hull.

Mercedes 709Ds 746/51 (L746 LWA, L751 LHL) have been on loan to Stagecoach Manchester.

Leyland Olympians 322/33/4 (A322 AKU, C333/4 HWJ) are at Hull. Mercedes-Benz 709D 25 (E95 YWB) and Leyland Leopard/Alexander P-type rebody 414 (DWF 24V) have been withdrawn.

Stagecoach London ST

Deliveries have slowed down (nearly 250 Dennis Tridents and 123 Darts were delivered in 2001), but 26 more TAS-class Alexander-bodied Tridents are on order. TAS526/7/9 (LX51 FOJ/K/N), with Alexander H43/19D bodywork, have been delivered; these had seen service with Connex but were delivered from Alexander in January.

The two ex-Stagecoach Viscount Volvo/Jonckheere coaches now carry fleetnumbers VJ4, 5 (L157/8 LBW), though LOTS reports they are officially listed as VJ8, 9.

Disposals are of Plaxton-bodied Dennis Darts DRL126/30 (K126/30 DRH), expected to go to Busways, and ex-Stagecoach Oxford PD81-3, 97 (M81-3, 97 WBW), PD715/6/20/1 (L715 JUD etc), Alexander-bodied Darts DAL621/2/4/32/4 (P621 PGP etc) and Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympians VN312/4/21-30/42/7/8 (M312/4 DGP, N321-30/42/7/8 HGK), of which PD81-3 have gone to Stagecoach Transit, DAL621/2/4/32/4 to Busways, VN321-30 to Fife and VN342 to West & Wales.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

Thirty more Dennis Tridents started arriving in February for, among other things, a shuttle service between the city centre and the Commonwealth Games Stadium, numbered 2002. They are 1601-10 (MF51 VXZ, VYA/B/G/N/O/U/V, VZA/E) and 1611-30 (MK02 EFU-Z, EGC-F/J/U/V/X-Z, EHB-E).

A514 (X514 UOM), the East Lancs-bodied Volvo B7TL, is continuing its Stagecoach Group trials with Busways as its 987.

Mercedes-Benz Varios were taken off the road for a short time in February following an accident. Numerous Mercedes 709Ds were borrowed from other Stagecoach operators to cover; they were South East 803 (L323 YDU), 853/6/7/61/8/9/72 (K853 ODY etc), 877/82/4 (L877/82/4 SDY), Bluebird 259 (G259 TSL), 307 (G196 PAO), Fife 87, 90 (K487/90 FFS), East Midland 746/51 (L746 LWA, L751 LHL), Busways 1490/9 (N490/9 NVK), 1501/19/20 (G280 TSL, G578 PRM, G254 TSL) and Cumberland 6 (N206 UHH), 63 (G265 TSL), 97 (N645 JSS), 580 (G180 PAO), 625 (K625 UFR). Fife 90 has been on loan to Bluebird as its 355 and came in that guise. Some minibus routes were operated temporarily with large buses, with Cumberland sending Volvo B10M 751 (K751 DAO) while Stagecoach United Counties supplied Volvo Olympians 564/8/84/6 (R564/8 DRP, R584/6 JVA), 703/4 (P569/70 EFL) and Leyland Olympians 623, 709 (F623 MSL, K709 ASC). In addition, seven buses were hired from Liverpool Motor Services to operate some Stockport routes. These were new Dennis Trident/Plaxton President PO51 UGF, ex-Bullock Dennis Dominator/East Lancs C721 NCD, ex-London Leyland Olympian/ECW D706 YHK, Leyland Lynx E256 TUB and ex-London United red Dennis Dart/Plaxton H539 HGK. Two LMS Metroriders were also hired, one for Stockport and one for Glossop.

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 3282 (F282 DRJ) was deroofed in Stockport on 25 February. Dennis Dominator 2006 (B906 TVR) has been withdrawn.

Stagecoach North East ST

Busways

There's some rationalisation of types going on just now, with Busways becoming a gathering ground for the group's few Volvo B10BLEs, while it has lost its four Dennis Lances. Ex-Stagecoach Manchester B10BLE/Northern Counties Prestige B43F P601-5 JBU are being transferred from Cambus, joining Busways' Alexander-bodied B10BLEs 2236-58. Five MAN 18.220/Alexander ALX300 are being transferred to Cambridge, the first to go being 459 (S459 OFT), which was repainted green/cream before collection from Newcastle. The Lances, Plaxton Verde-bodied 1201-3 (M201-3 DRG) and Optare Sigma-bodied 1204 (M204 DRG), have gone to Grimsby-Cleethorpes (not Hull as reported last month).

Ex-Stagecoach London Plaxton-bodied Dennis Darts 1300/4 (K112/27 SRH) are in service. Other Darts from the same source are Alexander Dash B36F-bodied 1798/9/801-3 (P621/2/4/32/4 PGP), while 1804 (M387 KVR) is a Dart 9.8SDL/Northern Counties Paladin B39F from Redby, Sunderland.

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GA	Go-Ahead Group
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SG	Status Bus & Coach Group
ST	Stagecoach Group
WG	Wellglade Group
YT	Traction Group

Among the more interesting buses borrowed by Stagecoach Manchester while its Vario minibuses were out of service was Liverpool Motor Services' recently delivered Dennis Trident/Plaxton President. PO51 UGF is seen here on its usual stamping ground, pulling out of Liverpool's Paradise Street bus station on a route run in competition with Glenvale Transport. ALEX HORNBY



Stagecoach North East has been removing some non-standard vehicles from its fleet, including the Dennis Lances that Busways bought in 1994, shortly before Stagecoach acquired the business. All four have gone to East Midlands' Grimsby-Cleethorpes fleet, including Plaxton Verde-bodied 22 (M202 DRG), where they join nine slightly older Lances with East Lancs bodies. ANDREW JAROSZ

London's Red Arrows

The Red Arrow network, on which London General plans to start running articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaros, was first introduced on 18 April 1966, when London Transport brought a new concept of bus travel to the built-up centre of its area. It imported the idea of 'crush loading' standee single-deckers on a network of routes connecting mainline railway terminals with parts of the City and West End that could not be reached directly by the Underground. The first route 500 (Victoria-Marble Arch) catered in different ways for peak period commuters and for daytime shoppers. It was operated with the first six XMS-class AEC Merlins with 25-seat (plus 48 standing) Strachans bodywork. The network grew, with MCW-bodied Merlins replacing the original vehicles, then 69 Leyland National 2 24-seaters replaced them in 1981. The network has since been cut back to three routes, 501/521 (Waterloo-London Bridge) and 507 (Waterloo-Victoria), and until the 31 Citaros arrive it will be in the hands of Leyland National Greenways created out of 42 of the 69 National 2s in 1992/93.

The East Lancs Vyking H47/28F-bodied Volvo B7TL under evaluation for the Stagecoach group has entered service at Byker, numbered 987 (X514 UOM). It was previously Stagecoach Manchester a514.

City Sightseeing MCW Metrobus BYX 144V was allocated fleetnumber B991 when here.

The conversion of six Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympians to open-top for Coach USA is that the programme has been abandoned following the drop in business after the terrorist attacks of 11 September. Three have returned for cannibalisation, 606 (C606 LFT) being engineless as well as roofless. 601 (C601 LFT) went to East Midland's Chesterfield garage in unaltered condition and then to Stagecoach Wales & West along with 609 (C609 LFT) and 604 (C604 LFT) was at Ribble, Preston, but has since left there. Olympians 620/60 (C620/60 LFT) are being cannibalised, while 639/48/57/63 (C639 LFT etc) have gone to Transit.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess 1437/50/3/7 (E437 AFT etc) are being cannibalised; 709D/Alexander 1513 (K617 UFR) and Optare MetroRiders 1693/4/7 (K166/7 FYG, J371 BNW) have been withdrawn, as has 709D driver trainer 1432 (E432 AFT). 709D 1508 (N642 VSS) and MetroRiders 1672/4/6/8 (H148 UUA, H160/70/4 WWT) have gone to North East Bus Breakers, Annfield Plain (dealer).

Transit

Acquisitions from Busways are Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Alexander H45/31F 955-8 (C639/48/57/63 LFT) and Dennis Dart 9.8SDL3017/Alexander B40F 1713 (K713 PCN). From East London come 9.8SDL3054/Plaxton ex-B37D 1710-2 (M81-3 WBW) converted to single-door (seating capacity unconfirmed).

Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Volvo Olympian 833 (R833 OVN) was deroofed at Metal Bridge north of Ferryhill, Co Durham, while on service X90 (Darlington-MetroCentre).

Now withdrawn are Leyland Atlantean 107 (EJR 107W), Leyland Fleetlines 121/43/4/9 (VVN 521T, JAJ 143/4W, PEF 149X) and Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 313/5 (HDZ 2613/5). These losses reduced Fleetline stock to just one, 142 (JAJ 142W), due to retire at the end of February on expiry of its freedom from defect certificate. It was expected to operate services 25/26 on 23 February to mark a farewell. Leyland Tiger 37 (ESU 263), Fleetlines 121/40/1/4-6/8/9 and 811Ds 315/25 have passed to North East Bus Breakers, Annfield Plain (dealer).

Stagecoach North West ST Cumberland

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 6 (N206 UHH), 63 (G265 TSL), 97 (N645 JSS), 580 (G180 PAO), 625 (K625 UFR) and Volvo B10M 751 (K751 DAO) have been on loan to Stagecoach Manchester. Duple Laser-bodied Leyland Tiger 105 (B105 HAO) has been withdrawn.

Bristol VR open-toppers 2035/7/8/76 (UWW 610/8/20/2S), Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 52/3, 572/91 (E511/2 PVV, G572 PRM, G191 PAO), Optare MetroRiders 307-9 (L807-9 TFY) and Leyland Tiger 1154 (B154 WRN) have all been sold.

Stagecoach South East ST

Mercedes 709Ds 803 (L323 YDU), 853/6/7/61/8/9/72 (K853 ODY etc), 877/82/4 (L877/82/4 SDY) went on loan briefly to Stagecoach Manchester in February.

South Coast Buses Dennis Lance 1210 (L210 YAG) has had an electronic numeral display added, but retains roller blind destination display; East Kent's 7804 (H804 BKK) has an electronic front display removed from withdrawn Leyland Titan 7224 (OHV 724Y).

Stagecoach South Midlands ST

Stagecoach Oxford has Alexander-bodied Volvo B10M-55 235 (N805 DNE) from Stagecoach Midland Red. Reserve fleet Dennis Dart 105 (P105 HNH) and Mercedes-Benz 811D 425 (K425 ARW) are back in use with Midland Red at Banbury, while the Warwickshire fleet has Alexander-bodied Volvo B6 472 (N237 JND) from Oxford (837). Leyland National 727 (PUK 627R) has been sold.

Stagecoach West & Wales ST Cheltenham & Gloucester

New here are Dennis Dart SLF/Alexander ALX200 B37F 978-80 (VX51 NXR-T) and Leyland Olympians acquired are ONLXB/1R/Alexander H45/31F 136 (C601 LFT) from Busways, ONLXCT/1RH/Optare DPH43/27F 160-2 (E500-2 LFL) and ONLXB/1R/Roe H47/29F 163 (UWW 3X) from Cambus. Other arrivals from other Stagecoach companies are Wright B29F-bodied Dennis Darts 447-50 (NDZ 3147-50) ex-Bluebird and similar 464/7 (NDZ 3134/7) from Red & White. Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 710 (M710 JDG) has been withdrawn.

Cheltenham District

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Alexander H45/31F 135 (C609 LFT) is an acquisition from Busways.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander 738 (N643 VSS) has been on loan from Cheltenham & Gloucester.

Swindon & District

Leyland Titan TLNXB2RR/Leyland H44/29F 1112 (B112 WUV) has been transferred from Cheltenham District. Dennis Dart/Alexander 920 is the last of its batch of five to lose roller front indicator blinds at front in favour of an electronic unit.

Volvo B6 1173 (M73 HHB) was reinstated as a driver trainer for just a month, becoming redundant again in December.

Red & White

Further cascaded Volvo B10Ms are Plaxton Interurban C51F 903-5 (P107/9 FRS, R117 OPS) from Western, exchanged for Alexander B51F-bodied B10M-55s 740-2 (H617-9 ACK) which were only here for 10 months. Dennis Darts 464/7 (NDZ 3134/7) have gone to Cheltenham & Gloucester.

Plaxton C51F-bodied B10M 935 (5796 MX, G530 LWU) has been withdrawn and Wright-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 306/7/10 (J306/7 UKG, K310 YKG) and Carlyle-bodied Dart 439 (G39 TGW) have gone to dealers.

Stephenson, Rochford, Essex

A recent acquisition is Scania/Plaxton 4000 double-decker D523 DWP (3698 E). Ikarus-bodied Volvo B10M E964 EHK has been sold, and ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian coach B689 BPU has gone to Fargo, Rayne.

Stort Valley, Stansted

Rental Dennis Javelins P22, 33, 44, 55, 66, 77, 88, 99, 222, 333, 444, 666, 777 TCC, P423/4 JDT and Volvo B10M P77 HMC have been returned to their lessors.

Stott, Oldham

Further ex-Travel West Midlands H43/30F Mk2 MCW Metrobuses are A704 UOE, B782, 802 AOP.

Supreme, Hadleigh, Essex

Another MCW Metrobus in stock is LOA 337X from Travel West Midlands. ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3/501 (Gardner) BTU 375S has been broken up for spares. Supreme converted the bus to Gardner power several years ago.

TM Travel, Old Tupton

Two B29F Optare Solos, Y197/8 KNB, have been bought from Mistral for Derbyshire route 33, the Chesterfield OrbitalLink, for which they are route branded with a big 'O' on the rear nearside windows showing the main parts of the route served.

Also acquired are K425/37 HWY, ex-London Central B26F Optare MetroRiders and KYX 800X, and H43/28D MCW Metrobus formerly with Metroline.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton L9 NCP has been sold to Canavan, Kilsyth.

Tellings-Golden Miller SG

Two Setra and two Caetano-bodied 49-seater toilet-equipped coaches are on order for this year, along with one Caetano Optimo 22-seater, to replace M60 TGM.

Tellings has taken over National Express work formerly undertaken by Excelsior. Initially, Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10Ms T9, 10 TGM and W40, 50 THM, plus R80 BCL from Burton, Haverhill, were used until five new coaches were delivered. Received at They were based at the newly established TGM Portsmouth from 3 January. Additional National Express vehicles are repainted Van Hool-bodied B10Ms N20 TGM and R10, 20 TGM.

Thamesdown Transport

Dennis Dart SLFs 163/4 (T163/4 RMR) have had their rear bike racks removed.

Darts now carry orange/white vinyls under cab windows proclaiming 'Swindon's Own Bus Company'. Leyland Fleetline 211 (XBU 19S) has been repainted with lower panelling and rear bustle in red prior to loan to Cross Country, Clare Eaton, Gloucestershire. Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 335 (M935 FHR) went on loan to First Western National from 20 December.

Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Dominator 59 (A59 WMW) and Northern Counties-bodied Fleetline 220 (XBU 19S) have been sold to Wigley, Carlton (dealer) for scrap. Northern Counties-bodied Fleetlines 216/7 (BVR 59, 89T) were withdrawn at the end of December.

Townlynx, Holywell, Flint

The first double-decker operated is East Lancs-bodied Leyland Atlantean MEK 18W from Lloyd of Bagillt. Light blue has replaced the red of Lloyd's livery. It has been noted at work on Flint-Mold schools service 28.

TransLinc, Lincoln

The Caetano Enigma-bodied Dennis R-type that appeared at Coach & Bus 2001 is in service, registered FJ51 JYL.

Travel West Midlands NX

The next batch of Dennis Tridents will be 4305-34 (BP 51 HDD-H/J-L/N/O/U/V/X-Z, HEJ/U/V, HFA-H/J-M). 4305-11 had arrived at Walsall by 4 February and 4312/3 at West Bromwich by 11 February. Volvo B7TLs 4300-4 (BU51 RYH/J/K/M/N) have been diverted to Travel Dundee and it is possible that later Tridents may take up these fleetnumbers.

Despite the substantial influx of new double-deckers, the Mk1 MCW Metrobus may survive until 2003; five are scheduled for a 12-month reprieve. Those still in all-day service are 2118, 2222/48/52 (GOG 118W etc), 2278 (K/JW 278W), 2334/5/50/73/6, 2400 (LOA 334X etc) while open-topper 2028 (BOK 28V) has spent the winter at Hockley.

Mk2 Metrobus 2912 (D912 NDA) is the latest dual purpose example in private hire livery. Further Metrobuses with Road Car include 2444/71 (NOA 444/71X), 2487/91, 2583/7/9 (POG 487Y etc), 2645 (ROX 645Y). Also in service there are former 2022, 2313/23, 2416 (BOK 22V, K/JW 313/23W, LOA 416X) acquired with the bus business of Eagre,

Trent Buses/Barton Buses WG

New Optare Solos 432-5 (FP51 GXR-U) entered service on route H1 ('Happy One!') between Derby, Heanor and Alfreton in late-January.

More DAF SB220/Optare Deltas withdrawn are 325 (J325 BVO), 330/8/9/42 (K330 FAL etc); the K-registered ones have all gone to McKindless, Wishaw. Further Deltas sold are 301 (J201 BVO) to Konect, Saham Toney, 321 (J321 BVO) to Beaver Bus, Wigston and, from Kinchbus, 346 (K346 FAL), which has gone to Barnsley & District. It is understood that 24 are to go to Traction Group fleets. Deltas 311/2 (J311/2 BVO) are driver trainers.

Leyland National 534 (FRA 534V) has been sold to Bowers, Chapel-en-le-Frith while Volvo B10B 118 (L118 LRA) has been delicensed following accident damage and Optare Solo 425 (W425 RTO) after an engine compartment fire.

Mercedes Varios 827/8 (R827/8 WBC) have been transferred from Kinchbus, and are in red and cream livery, while MAN/Optare Vecta 811 (M811 PRA) has gone the other way. Dennis Lance/Optare Sigma 355 (M355 PRA) driver trainer has returned to passenger service at Notts & Derby.

Volvo B10M coaches 57/8 (P57/8 WTO) have been painted in a turquoise Commuter Express livery for a service between Sandiacre and Nottingham.

Turner, Wickham St Paul, Essex

Former Shearings Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3ARZ/Duple 320 C53F G800/2 RNC are acquisitions from Courtney, Bracknell, joining similar VJI 9415 (C901 FMP) here.

UK North, Manchester

Further Leyland-bodied Leyland Olympians acquired from London United are L302/5/8 (G302 UYK etc). They retain these fleetnumbers.

Wallace Arnold

Former Southdown Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Titan PD3/4s BUF 267, 425C continue in seasonal use here, 267 based at Leeds and 425 at Torquay. 425 returned for winter store at Leeds as usual. Not previously recorded is that both then made a 1,500-mile overland trip together to Lisbon to transport guests at the Association of British Travel Agents conference. They took a week to complete the journey each way — without incident.

Weavaway, Newbury

Neoplan Cityliner SOB 10M has been re-registered 327 RFC for its use as the team coach for Reading Football Club.

Ex-Trent DAF SB220/Optare Deltas J313/5 BVO have been re-registered B10 MKC and B10 MKF. The previous B10 MKC, MCW Metrorider (*WOI 3005*, *G683 KNN*) has passed to Keeping, Penrhiwceiber and ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian EEH 910Y to Ensign (dealer). Metrorider B10 KMC is mothballed.

Whippet, Fenstanton

Leyland Titan OHV 813Y is being converted to single-door, after which it will receive fleet livery. Former Wallace Arnold Volvo B10Ms P335/6 VWR have returned to Volvo, but Mercedes-Benz Vario V983 DNB has since arrived on loan.

White Rose, Thorpe, Surrey

As reported in this month's 'News' section, this company ceased operating on 28 February. Before then, MCW Metrobuses B149 EDP (ex-Reading) and C308 BUV passed to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer).

Glyn Williams, Crosskeys

The last remaining Leyland National is Mk2 20 (MHJ 732V) new to Eastern National, following withdrawal of 18 (HHH 371V) new to Cumberland.

York Country Buses, York

The current fleet comprises Iveco 49.10/Reeve Burgess B20FL H706 YUV from Frodingham, Driffeld; Mercedes-Benz B14D/Plaxton Beaver B27F V91 UVV and B31F W577 JUV, both bought new; plus non-operative Iveco 49.10/Robin Hood DP19F D43 OKH ex-PVS, Carlton (dealer).

Yorkshire Coastliner BL

The ever-thorough West Yorkshire Information Service has established that Volvo Olympian 437 (chassis 29747) was not the last built — it was just the last example for the UK market and also the last Alexander Royale for the UK.

Chassis 29748 went to Morton, Dublin as its 00 D 64065 and 29749 went to Dualway, Rathcoole as

00 D 43135, but both entered service before the Coastliner batch. The last Olympian to be licensed and placed into service was Singapore Bus Services on chassis 29650 in July 2000, as its SBS 9670H and it also carries the last Alexander Royale body (9802/70); this style was originally produced for Singapore and offered later in the UK.

Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympian H152 GGS was acquired from Sovereign London early in January for use in the new Malton-Yorkshire Coast College service 396 contract. Unfortunately, not having coach seats (as all other double-deckers here do) and also having limited top speed, it was sent back three days later as unsuitable. It is expected to settle with Lancashire United.

Yorkshire Terrier YT

MCW Metrobus Mk2 DR102/27/MCW H43/30F 1735/8/9 (POG 516/86Y, ROX 645Y) are in use at Ecclesfield. Mk1 1731 (KJW 304W) has been withdrawn and the cannibalised remains of 1730 (KJW 307W) have gone to Wigley, Carlton (dealer).

Yorkshire Traction YT

The Volvo B7TL/East Lancs demonstrator at Barnsley is confirmed as numbered 803 (X645 RDA) and was used on service X32, now also home to the intriguing Kirm Mogul 208. Two new B7TLs are reported due.

Volvo B6LE/Wright N416 KPS is numbered 802 and is used at Rawmarsh, while Optare Solo demonstrator W667 DDN is numbered 801 and moved on to Yorkshire Terrier.

Bristol VRT/SL2 towing bus RV1 (WWE 98L, *FHE 800L*) has passed to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) for scrap. It never carried its WWE mark.

ISLE OF MAN

Isle of Man Transport

Another DAF DB250/East Lancs Myllennium Lowlander is 54 (FMN 181P). It is built to the new IoM regulations so is H47/27F, but otherwise is to a similar specification to last year's deliveries. Nine more, 55-57, 76-81, are due in April-May.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

JERSEY

Tantivy Blue Coach Tours

The ex-Pioneer Optare MetroRider/B25F, J 14097 (*J176 MCW*) new to Burnley & Pendle and later with Stagecoach Ribble, has passed via Wacton, Bromyard (dealer) and to Smithy Garage, Tysoe on school contracts, back to J176 MCW.

ALDERNEY

Riduna Buses

Ex-Tantivy Bedford SB5/Duple Dominant C41F 44 (*J176 MCW*) has been acquired and will be re-registered with the famous AY 91 mark.

Two former Tantivy petrol-engined Bedfords, VAS2/Duple Vista C29F AY 305 (*J 26408*, *BEA 420J*) and SB3/Duple Vega AY 91 (*J 43805*) have gone to Wacton, Bromyard (dealer) for scrap.

Group codes

AA — Arriva Passenger Services
BL — Blazefield Holdings
DG — DelGro
EY — EYMS Group
FG — FirstGroup
GA — Go-Ahead Group
NX — National Express Group
SG — Status Bus & Coach Group
ST — Stagecoach Group
WG — Wellglade Group
YT — Traction Group

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FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:

BASED:

FOUNDED:

WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:

LIVERY:

HOW MANY VEHICLES?:

MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?:

Go West Travel Ltd, trading as Norfolk Green

Hamlyn Way, King's Lynn with outstations at Downham Market, Heacham, Leverington, Ringstead, Upwell and Walsingham.

October 1995 by experienced managers who saw an opportunity to purchase and expand the existing west Norfolk business of Ringstead-based Haynes, which traded as Norfolk Green. Managing director Ben Colson is a well-known figure within the industry and draws on 30 years' experience, notably with Stagecoach. Eniway Coaches of Saham Toney was bought in 1996, but sold again three years later.

Principally around King's Lynn on a mix of Norfolk County Council tendered routes and commercial services. Also operates commercially in Wisbech and Boston.

Two-tone green (green is the county colour) with white relief and a four-tree logo. Fleetnumbers are also now carried.

Thirty-one, the majority of which are Mercedes-engined minibuses with the most recent new additions being a quartet of Optare Solos. The last of several ex-Barton Leyland Leopards was joined recently by a pair of DAF/Optare Deltas from Trent. A couple of Plaxton Derwent-bodied Tigers came from Tillingbourne after that company's receivership last year while one Bristol VRT remains following the purchase of two Arriva London MCW Metrobuses.

Several candidates include a pair of rare Mercedes-Benz O.405Ns (one a former demonstrator with UVG-finished bodywork) and a Yorkshire Coastliner Optare StarRider with personalised registration 55 BUS.



Norfolk Green's UVG-finished Mercedes-Benz O.405N, 208 (R280 SDT), receives some adjustments to its nearside mirror in King's Lynn bus station during February. Next to it is 502 (KY0 622X), one of the ex-Arriva London MCW Metrobuses. ANDY IZAIT

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to **Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** to reach him by **15 April** for the **June** issue.

Addison, Callander

Carlyle-bodied Iveco Daily 49.10 J765 YWA has been repainted into red and cream fleet livery.

Allander, Milngavie

Duple-bodied DAF MB200 AT43 (HGA 810X) was named Highland Monarch last year.

Arriva Scotland West AA

Not previously recorded is the fact that Plaxton Prestige B41F-bodied DAF SB220GG R990 FNW was on loan from Arriva Bus & Coach (dealer) during December and was used from Johnstone depot.

Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts 403-6 (ex-Arriva London) entered service from Johnstone depot in January in full Arriva livery.

Plaxton Pointer 2-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 798 and 800 have had their white and green Glasgow Airport Link livery replaced by the new Scottish Citylink livery with branding for service 905 (Glasgow-Glasgow Airport). This development is particularly interesting given that Citylink is a partner in the Glasgow Airport Quality Partnership, which led to the white and green livery being adopted in the first place for services between the city centre and the airport, together with associated publicity, stop and shelter branding. The use of that livery by rival operator Scotway (with consequent confusion for the travelling public) may be a factor in this reversal of policy.

Alexander Strider B51F-bodied Scania L113CRL 505 (M105 RMS) was transferred to Arriva Merseyside in February.

The remaining operations based on the reduced Greenock depot established last year were due to come to an end on 22 March, when all Strathclyde Passenger Transport school contracts in the area were to be transferred to McGill, Port Glasgow.

Austin, Earlston

Sitar Beluga C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.815DT USU 643 was delivered recently to this operator.

Avondale, Greenock

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D F300 RMH (HSK 177, F300 RMH) and Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814D M65 HTY have passed to Gillen, Port Glasgow.

Bain, Oldmeldrum

Further to the October issue, the Caetano Optimo MkV C26F-bodied Toyota Coaster BB50R new last June is Y147 RSS, not Y147 RSA.

Bulldog, Whitburn

Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D W385 WGE was new in June 2000 but has not been recorded until now.

Buskers, Galashiels

Service 90 (Hawick-Melrose, Borders General Hospital) was cancelled from 1 April.

Caledonia, Glasgow

Dormobile B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L421 CPB was acquired in January ex-Anslow, Pontypool but previously Arriva Cymru MMM721. It was followed in February by B22F-bodied Optare MetroRider L807 TFY ex-Stagecoach North West 307.

Canavan, Kilsyth

L9 NCP is a Dennis Dart with Plaxton B35F bodywork acquired in February. New to Capital, West Drayton, it was then AirLinks 1103 and last owned by TM Travel, Old Tupton. A legacy from its days as an airport staff shuttle bus is that its destination display is almost non-existent — small size of font for the lettering and nearly illegible.

Christie, Alloa

Irizar-bodied Scania K113TRB N846 DKU has been re-registered XSU 977.

Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/28 RND 618X (JIL 8215, ULS 616X) has been sold to Blythwood (dealer), Glasgow.

City Sprinter, Renfrew

Alexander Sprint B23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D G279 TSL was acquired in January ex-Stagecoach Western 68. The remains of Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D507 NWG had gone by last September.

Clan, New Stevenston

Made to Measure C26F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D H501 BND was sold to Docherty, New Stevenston last year.

Coakley, Motherwell

The decision by the traffic commissioner to revoke this company's operator licence has been upheld by the Transport Tribunal, with the result that the firm was expected to cease running buses at midnight on 22 March, as required by the tribunal's decision.

In the meantime, further vehicles joined the fleet in February in the shape of B23F-bodied Optare MetroRiders H60/1 PNY, previously Newport Transport 60/1.

MCW Metrobus B78 WUL was sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in January.

Comet, Port Glasgow

Dormobile-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D G100 NBD was sold to Blythwood (dealer), Glasgow in November and subsequently passed to Skyline, Glasgow.

Crawford, Kirkintilloch

Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger 3935 AC (E688 UNE) carries fleetnumber PT3.

Plaxton C48F-bodied Leyland Leopard JNJ 25V (414 DCD, GWV 928V) was sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall for scrap last June.

Crawford, Neilston

Optare Soroco-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413CDi FX51 BNN was re-registered S19 HCC in January.

Cuthbert, Annan

Caetano Enigma C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 SA51 ZJN was new in January.

DB Travel, Dumbarton

Coachcraft C25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D E876 GFV was sold to Blythwood (dealer), Glasgow in January.

Docherty, Glasgow

Northern Counties-bodied Dodge S56 C831 CBU had been sold by the end of last year.

Docherty, Irvine

A new 49-seat Bova Futura has been ordered for delivery in June. Van Hool Alizée C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N213 HJSJ was acquired from Meney, Saltcoats in January.

Dodds, Ayr

Vehicles that had left the fleet by the end of last year included Plaxton Supreme IV Express C53F-bodied AEC Reliance BAO 867T and Caetano Optimo C19F-bodied Toyota Coaster HZB30R TDZ 3592.

Doig, Glasgow

Irizar C57Fi-bodied Scania K113CRB N93 WVC and Irizar C53F-bodied Scania L941B T200 LCT had gone to Scania (dealer), Worksop by the end of last year, while Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsa B55-10 NSP 338R has been sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall for scrap.

Dumfries & Galloway Council

The two Dennis Darts mentioned in 'Scottish Column' were acquired in February and are Wright Handybus-bodied 9.8SDLs K858 PCN and K375 RTY ex-Go Northern 8058/75. They were to be converted from B40F to B42F before entering service; one will be based at Castle Douglas and the other at Newton Stewart.

Dunn, Port Glasgow

The remains of Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger BHK 210X and Plaxton-bodied Volvo B58-61 ESB 17X had gone by January.

Dunnachie, Craighouse

The latest arrival for the Jura Bus Service is Excel M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413CDi Y544 HWE. Dormobile B16F-bodied Ford Transit J420 JSB passed some time ago to Shergold, Welwyn Garden City.

Essbee, Coatbridge

Maintenance problems have resulted in the traffic commissioner cutting the vehicle authorisation on this company's licence from 40 to 25, and indicating that any application to increase the authorisation would not be considered for a year.



MS9 (SH51 MHV), one of First Glasgow's 9.2m Optare Solos, pulling away from the city's recently opened science centre and observation tower. They have replaced 84-seat Volvo Citybuses on the lightly loaded and under publicised Inner Circle service.

ALAN MILLAR

STAGECOACH GROUP LOSES OUT IN DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY CHANGES

The latest round of tendering by Dumfries & Galloway Council is resulting in various local services passing from one operator to another at the end of March, with the Stagecoach group involved in a few of the more notable changes.

The most significant development is undoubtedly the transfer of the remaining work at Stagecoach Western's depot in Whithorn to King's of Kirkcowan. The contracts for the services from Newton Stewart to the Machars and to Girvan are being taken over by King's. The former can be minibus operated while the latter, funded jointly by Dumfries & Galloway and South Ayrshire councils, requires the purchase at least two full-size single-deck buses to carry out the contract, as it incorporates provision of transport for Douglas Ewart High School pupils from the Glentworth area.

Stagecoach's loss of this work will lead to the closure of its Whithorn depot, ending a period of 75 years in which the company and its predecessors have had a depot in the town.

Some of the Stagecoach Western work transferred some time ago to Stagecoach Cumberland has also been lost, with Houston's Minicoaches of Lockerbie taking over the Lockerbie town service and Lockerbie-Bankhill route.

MacEwan's Coaches of Amisfield has also lost some contracts to various operators, with the transfer of Lockerbie-Hightae-Dumfries and other work to White Star of Lockerbie already reported last month. R. K. Armstrong Coaches of Castle Douglas has won the contracts to provide Monday to Saturday service 512 (Castle Douglas town service); Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday 515 (Castle Douglas-Laurieston); and Monday/Wednesday/Friday service 516 (Castle Douglas-Auchencarn or Dundrennan).

Another of MacEwan's contracts passing to a different operator is that for the Wednesday and Saturday service between Laurieston and Dumfries, which will now be operated by the council itself using one of a pair of Wright-bodied Dennis Darts which are being added to its red and yellow DGC fleet.

Dart's operator licence is revoked

The Scottish traffic commissioner has revoked the operator licence held by Dart Buses of Paisley.

The company had appeared before the deputy traffic commissioner at a public inquiry last September, following allegations that it had regularly failed to operate some of its registered local services including certain subsidised routes. That hearing was adjourned in order to allow the production of further, substantial amounts of evidence against the company from Strathclyde Passenger Transport. Dart Buses was subsequently placed in liquidation at the end of October, before the hearing could resume.

As there was no response to a letter written to the company by the traffic area office at the end of December requesting further information, the commissioner revoked the licence with immediate effect.

First Aberdeen FG

Leyland Olympians 105/9 have been repainted into Barbie 2 colours, and Plaxton Expressliner 2-bodied Volvo B10M-60 81 is now in Grampian Executive livery.

First Edinburgh FG

The latest repaints into Barbie 2 livery include Mercedes-Benz O.405 67; Leyland Tigers 144/51; Dennis Dart 212; Scania L113CRL 507; Mercedes-Benz 711D 690; Mercedes-Benz 709D 698; MCW Metrobuses 809/14/33; Leyland Olympian 971; Volvo B10M-61 2202; and Volvo B10M-60 2207.

Most of the new Wright Solar-bodied Scania L94UBs (536-48) have been transferred to Musselburgh depot with older vehicles such as Leyland Tigers taking their place at Westfield depot for use on service 23. In a thawing of the bus war in Edinburgh, the company is to withdraw services 23 and 87, but the traffic commissioner refused to waive the normal time limit for cancelling a service, and as a result they will run until April.

First Glasgow FG

The 10 forthcoming Volvo B7L double-deckers will have East Lancs Nordic H55/40F bodywork, although they were initially to have had dual-door H50/35D bodies. It is anticipated that they will be allocated to Parkhead depot. A further 10 double-deckers will join the fleet in the summer in the shape of Alexander H53/31F-bodied Leyland Olympian ON3R49C18Z4 K480-9 EUX originally built for China Motor Bus, Hong Kong but currently with First Manchester as its 3010/01-9, and these are expected to be based at Knightswood depot.

The first of the 15 long-awaited B30F-bodied Optare Solo M920s for this fleet entered service in February as MS1-11 (SH51 MKM-P, MHN/M/O/U/V/X, MJY), initially on a variety of duties but quickly transferred to Inner Circle service 89/90. They are in corporate livery and are allocated to Parkhead depot. More corporate-liveried Wright Eclipse B41F-bodied Volvo B7Ls entered service from Parkhead in February, including SV663-72 (SJ51 DKF/K/L, DHC-G/K/L) and SV675/80 (SH51 MKJ, MJE).

East Lancs Lolyne H94F-bodied Dennis Trident Y668 DRA, numbered 668 in the Nottingham City Transport fleet and shown on page 47 of the February issue, was inspected by this company on 30 January but was not used in passenger service.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds MA168/82, Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D MA240 and Volvo B10B-58 SV304 are now in Barbie 2 livery although MA240 retains its white roof.

With reference to the November issue, Mercedes-Benz minibus MA181 (not MA214) is B21F rather than B23F.

The remains of fire-damaged Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsa B55-10 A76 (KGG 136Y) were sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in January.

A further round of service changes, including alterations to Overground routes, is expected to be implemented at the end of April.

Fitzcharles, Grangemouth

Plaxton C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 163 NHO (USA 945X) had left this fleet by January.

SCOTTISH COLUMN

SANDY MACDONALD

Dunnachie of Craighouse J420 JSB, the recently replaced Isle of Jura Ford Transit with Dormobile body, on an Argyll & Bute tendered service in June 1996. It had just collected schoolchildren from the LDV minibus disappearing behind on the A846, the main road on this Inner Hebridean island (population just over 200).
ALAN MILLAR



Forrester, Tighnabruaich

Plaxton B23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D J937 WHJ was acquired some time ago ex-Arriva East Herts & Essex 2317.

Gibson, Renfrew

A change of direction by this operator may be represented by the arrival in February of Plaxton Cheeta C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D SJ51 GCV, the first new coach for the fleet.

Gillen, Port Glasgow

Additions to this fleet in January comprised Caetano Optimo C18F-bodied Toyota Coaster HDB30R K32 VRY ex-Camden, West Kingsdown and Reeve Burgess Beaver C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D F300 RMH (*HSK 177, F300 RMH*) ex-Avonvale, Greenock. They were followed in February by Plaxton Beaver C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814D M65 HTY also ex-Avonvale.

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D F700 LCA was re-registered XBZ 7836 some time ago. Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster HDB30R H993 FKK was sold to Glen, Port Glasgow in January.

Glasgow Citybus

Alexander Sprint B23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L152 FRJ joined this fleet in February in red, white and yellow fleet livery; it was previously Arriva Cymru MMM752.

Glen, Port Glasgow

Caetano Optimo C21F-bodied Toyota Coaster HDB30R H993 FKK was acquired in January ex-Gillen, Port Glasgow. Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D S677 ASX was sold to Coach Europe (dealer), Enderby in November.

Goosecroft, Denny

Wadham Stringer-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M879 DDS has been repainted into the white, red and yellow fleet livery.

Grangeburn, Motherwell

Alexander B62F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R GSO 78V was acquired in December from Whitelaw, Stonehouse.

HAD Coaches, Shotts

SN51 UDY is a further Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart delivered recently, and is in the blue and silver livery. Another two vehicles of this type had also arrived by February.

Fleetnumbers have started to appear on vehicles in this fleet, those noted so far being on Leyland Olympians A729/7/31 YFS (1, 3, 4) and Volvo Ailsas OSN 871Y, HSR 37, 42/4X, OSN 856Y, HSR 45X (6-11).

Harrold, South Keiss

Duple Laser C57F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R 869 SVX (*A179 MKE*) was purchased in December ex-Arriva Northumbria 220.

Henderson, Hamilton

Operation of commercial service 11 (Rutherglen, Town Hall-Fernhill) ceased on 16 March. A bus war is, however, developing between this operator and Stepdend Coaches in the Airdrie and Coatbridge area, and this has led to the introduction of new services from 20 March. 117 (Coatbridge, Gartcross Road-Glasgow, Buchanan bus station) operates on Saturdays only while 312 (Coatbridge, South Circular Road-Bargeddie) runs on Mondays to Saturdays and duplicates the similar Stepdend service. The existing service 117, and 212 (Coatbridge-Caldercruix), were altered from the same date.

Horsburgh, Pumpherston

Changes to commercial services operated by this firm took place on 25 February. They included replacement of Livingston town services 209/210 by new circular service 212 (Livingston bus terminal, Howden, Ladywell, Livingston North station); introduction of new commuter express 216 (Livingston-Edinburgh via Howden, Ladywell and Broxburn); and withdrawal of 303 (Livingston-Deans). West Lothian Council service 408 (Kirkton Campus-Livingston South station) was withdrawn from 15 February.

Irvine, Salsburgh

Van Hool-bodied DAF SB2305 D101 TWF (*25 PMX, LIL 2186, D65 CUY*) was re-registered JIL 8559 some time ago. Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-60 F235 ESU (*JIL 8559, F235 ESU*) was sold to Volvo Bus (dealer), Loughborough in October.

Jay, Greengairs

Berkhof-bodied Volvo B10M-61 ESK 675 (*C692 SSB, LGL 722*) was re-registered C711 MDS in November before being sold to Kirkby (dealer), Anston. Plaxton-bodied Volvo B58-56 TJI 1983 (*TSU 634R*) was sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in August.

Keir, Kemnay

Made to Measure C18F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D FJP 501 (*K657 VWF*) was purchased last May ex-Melvin, Aberdeen.

King, Kirkcowan

Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 E434 CGA (*4488 WD, E434 CGA, LSK 831, E638 UNE*) was acquired in February ex-Midland, Auchterarder.

Duple-bodied Ford R1014s CBM 300T, RIB 5090 (*JBH 391V*) and Plaxton-bodied Ford R1114 GVP 952W have been sold to King Brothers (dealer), Stranraer for scrap. Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RH SIW 4737 (*D744 KPT, 325 CCE, D274 FAS*) and Plaxton-bodied Volvo B58-61 ASG 585W were sold in November and January to Hawkes, Newtownards and Britton, Artigarvan respectively.

Kirkpatrick, Banchory FG

Devon Conversions M12-bodied Mercedes-Benz L307D 909 (*LSK 546, D951 VSS*) was given back its original registration in January before being withdrawn; it was the last vehicle in Kirkpatrick's cream, red, maroon and grey livery.

Lindsay, Lochboisdale

C53F-bodied Bova Europa EL29/581 B642 OAY was acquired by this South Uist operator in January ex-Starr, Ossett.

Lothian

Ninety four-seat East Lancs Lolyne-bodied Dennis Trident Y668 DRA, numbered 668 in the Nottingham City Transport fleet, was inspected at Central Garage on 30 January and subsequently road tested on Airlink service 100, albeit without passengers. It is understood that this was to allow assessment of the use of double-deckers of this size on the airport service.

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 761-3/5-74 were all reinstated for further service towards the end of January, having been fully repainted. 764 was treated similarly but remained in reserve in mid-February at Longstone Garage carrying the incorrect front and rear registration plates B764 CSC, rather than B764 GSC.

All Mk1 Leyland Nationals have been given front and rear fleetnumbers as their registration and fleet numbers do not match, and have been fitted with nearside route number boxes. Coach-seated Leyland Olympians 366-71 have also been given the latter feature.

Changes from 28 January saw service 45 (Riccarton-Whitecraig) revert to its former route terminating at Brunstane, allowing double-deckers to be used as previously. A new half-hourly daytime service 40 was introduced linking the city centre and Whitecraig, and all of Marine Garage's allocation of Leyland Nationals was transferred to Central Garage for this service, together with 13, 24, 29 and linked 30/36/49. Service X78 (Penicuik-Crewe Toll) was also reintroduced, offering one return peak journey.

The first phase of the new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh at Little France was opened on 28 January. At the outset, 26 buses per hour will pass the hospital with some direct services from the city centre. Services 8, 24 and 38 have been extended into the hospital site from their former termini at Gilmerton and Cameron Toll, while services 32/52, 33 and 49 stop outside on the main Old Dalkeith Road.

Lowe, Cuminstown

This Aberdeenshire firm, which trades as W. & G. Coaches, acquired Alexander Sprint B23F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds G276/92 TSL in December. They were previously Stagecoach Busesways 1529/6.

McColl, Balloch

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-60 MUD 490 (*L845 RST*) was given back its original registration last year, allowing Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 R952 RCH to be re-registered MUD 490.

McKindless, Wishaw

Optare Delta B48F-bodied DAF SB220s K330/8/42 FAL were acquired in January ex-Trent Buses 330/8/42. Similar J307 BVO has been re-registered YIB 4337.

Rare Plaxton-bodied Quest 80 VM EC309 (A824 ASJ, 84 MQ 341, A822 LEL) was sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in September.

MacNeil, Castlebay

Mellor-bodied Ford Transit A326 CSE had been sold by the end of last year.

Mac Tours, Cockenzie

As reported in 'News' last month, this company moved its vehicles from its premises at New Street into a rented part of the Seafield Road works of Lothian Buses in January, and entered into negotiations which could lead to it becoming a wholly owned subsidiary of the latter.

The recently acquired fleet of Park Royal-bodied AEC Routemasters was being stored at Athelstaneford in East Lothian in February, before being prepared for service at Seafield by Lothian Buses staff. Those not reported last month comprise O44/32R-bodied JSJ 748/7/6 (*VLT 80/4, 90*), VLT 163, 235 ex-Arriva Original London Sightseeing Tour ERM80/4, 90, 163, 235; CUV 248C ex-Original RCL2248; and O32/25R-bodied LDS 239A (*WLT 727*) ex-East Yorkshire 817. Further to last month's issue, CUV 210C is H32/25R.

Further fleetnumbers to note include 1 (Bristol Lodekka LD6G 833 AFM); 2 (Leyland Titan PD2A/30 DHC 784E); 3 (Bristol Lodekka FS6G XSL 228A, 866 NHT); 4 (Leyland Titan PD3/4 FTE 631B); 5 (Leyland Titan PD2/40 LST 873, *CEO 952*); 9, 10 (Leyland Atlantean PDR1A/1s WRH 294J, ARH 304K), 11/2 (Volkswagen LT55s F934 AWW, F572 RCW); and 19 (Leyland Titan PD3A HFR 507E).

ECW-bodied Bristol VRTs HKE 690L and XRR 175S were returned to Hoare, Chepstow in January followed by Bristol Lodekka 841 SHW in February.

Marshall, Baillieston

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-60 7617 SM (*K827 HUM*) was repainted into Caledonian Travel livery last year.

Mathieson, Inverness

PMT-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D OIL 4570 (*H815 LFS*) has been sold to Rapson's Coaches.

Mayne, Buckie

This company has been awarded the title of Coach Operator of the Year 2002, for the 16 to 30-vehicle category, having been shortlisted for the overall Coach Operator of the Year award.

MCT, Motherwell

This company has won the Disability Aware Coach Operator 2002 award, its second successive year of winning this distinction. The judges felt that the firm pays special attention to the disabled community, with vehicles built for the role rather than adapted and staff trained to deal with clients. The directors were considered to 'understand the requirements of special needs transport through personal and professional experience, and supply these services without exception or stigma'.

Meffan, Kirriemuir YT

Contrary to previous reports that suggested that it would only be used for spares, Optare StarRider-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D F29 CWY has entered service in all-over white.

Mellor-bodied Ford Transits D777 NDV and F351 DVR had gone from the fleet by February.

Meney, Saltcoats

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N213 HSJ was sold to Docherty, Irvine in January.

Midland, Auchterarder

Go North East blue/red/yellow-liveried Wright Eclipse-bodied Volvo B7L demonstrator Y814 BOJ was on loan to this operator for a few days around the end of January. It was used on service 19 (Perth-Blackford).

Miller, Airdrie

Mercedes-Benz L608Ds C426 VVN, D36 KKP, D538 RCK, D433 UHC and D170 VRP, with assorted bodywork, had all left the fleet by last October. Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3F/5R GCU 86W passed to Hartley, Airdrie in January.

Milligan, Mauchline

C49Ft-bodied Kässbohrer Setra S215HD DSK 589 (*TSU 602, D92 BPH*) was purchased in January ex-MacKay, Edinburgh and immediately re-registered MIL 2410. Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-61 MIL 2410 (*D224 LWY*) was also re-registered at that time but its new mark is not yet known.

Mundell, Port Askaig

W103 ASB is a Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D with B33F bodywork, manufacturer unknown, which was new to this Islay operator by August 2000. Caetano C53F-bodied Bedford YMT XKM 469S and Duple Dominant B66F-bodied Bedford YRT JSB 870P had been scrapped by the operator by the end of 2000.

Munro, Jedburgh

Plaxton Beaver 2-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D R939 AMB and Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLF S782 RNE were being used by this operator at the beginning of February, presumably on loan from a dealer although the former carried Munro fleetnames and legal lettering.

Nicoll, Laurencekirk

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D SN51 WYC was new in January.

Nicolson, Borne

Plaxton C53F-bodied Bedford YMT HUH 995W (RBZ 8495, HUH 995W) joined the fleet last September ex-Reid, Rhynie.

Park, Hamilton

KSK 981-3 are Jonckheere CH57/14Ct-bodied Volvo B12Ts which were new in January, while Jonckheere Millennium Mistral C53F-bodied Volvo B12M-62s HSK 641-50, KSK 950-3/80, and LSK 821/4/5/7/30-2/5/9/44/5 were due to arrive by March. Of these, KSK 950-3/81-3 and LSK 830/2/5/9 are expected to be in black and gold fleet livery, while HSK 641-50 and LSK 821/4/5/7/44/5 will be in white for the addition of four liveries.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-60s R404 EOS (LSK 844, LSK 444) and R428 EOS (LSK 514) were sold to Volvo Bus (dealer), Loughborough in February together with similar Jonckheere-bodied T713 UOS (HSK 644) and T729 UOS (KSK 981).

Paterson, Kilbirnie

C49F-bodied Bova FHD12-340 R50 TPB had passed to Adams, Chapelton by January.

Peace, Skene

Jonckheere C53F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCL10/3ARZM E684 NNH was acquired last September ex-Lees, Lumphanan.

Prentice, Haddington

Plaxton C53F-bodied Scania K93CRB RIL 1356 (J282 NNC) was given back its original registration before being sold to Kirkby (dealer), Anston in November.

Prentice, West Calder

MCW H45/30F-bodied MCW Metrobus DR102/63s E452/3/5 SON were acquired in February ex-Arriva Merseyside 826-8. They arrived in Arriva corporate livery with red paint daubed over the areas where fleetnames had previously been displayed.

Rapson, Brora

ECW H45/32F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R SHE 309Y appears to be on loan from the Rapson Group; although not yet reported as having been acquired by that operator, it is in the two-tone blue livery. It was previously Stagecoach East Midlands 309.

Rapson's Coaches RN

490-2/4-8 (OFA 990, FSU 718, LTU 284, SY51 EHT-X) are new Plaxton Prima-bodied Dennis Javelin 70-seat school buses in coach livery with Rapson fleetnames. 495/6 are based at Dunbeath.

Vehicles acquired recently from Nicolson, Borne comprise Plaxton B33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814Ds 75/6 (W691/2 WST), Plaxton B43F-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL 200 (P817 EST), and UVG B69F-bodied Dennis Javelin R849 CJS. 75/6 and 200 have been repainted into the two-tone blue livery.

Other recent additions comprise Wright NimBus B33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 71-3 (K314/6 YKG, J414 PRW) ex-Stagecoach Red & White 314/6, 214 and similar PMT C33F-bodied 74 (OIL 4570, H815 LFS) ex-Mathieson, Inverness.

Reid, Rhynie

Van Hool Alizée C50Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-61 VRY 357 was acquired last October ex-Watermill, Fraserburgh and Duple C53F-bodied Volvo B58-56 FON 980V followed in November ex-Walker, Fochabers.

Vehicles sold towards the end of last year comprised Plaxton-bodied Bedford YMT HUH 995W (RBZ 8495, HUH 995W) to Nicolson, Borne in September; Optare CityPacer-bodied Volkswagen LT55 D344 JUM to Tulloch, Forres in October; Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-62 HSK 815 (N85 LSE) to Watermill, Fraserburgh in October; Mazda E2000 J418 KFP to Tulloch in November; and Plaxton-bodied Volvo B58-56 A218 DJS (A178 DJS, QJS 317) to Walker, Fochabers in November.

Rennie, Dunfermline

Leyland H44/24D-bodied Leyland Titan TNLXB2RRs OHV 721/71, 805/12/4Y were acquired in February ex-Stagecoach London T721/71, 805/12/4.

Scotguide, Glasgow

A new half-hourly, daily Glasgow Riverside circular City Sightseeing tour via Glasgow Harbour and the Scottish Exhibition Centre was due to start on 23 March.

Scotway, Paisley

Northern Counties-bodied Renault S56s H335/6, 433 DHA had passed to Campbell (dealer), Alexandria by January; the previously reported disposal of similar H332 DHA to Campbell was presumably also on the same basis.

Silver Fox, Renfrew

Van Hool Alizée C44Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R418 EOS (LSK 870) has been acquired recently ex-Trathens, Plymouth.

Bova FHD12-280 JIL 5280 (E953 CSS) and Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-60 JIL 4386 (G370 GCV) were sold to Coach Europe (dealer), Enderby in November.

Skyline, Glasgow

Dormobile B29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D G100 NBD was purchased in December ex-Comet, Port Glasgow.

Slocoach, Motherwell

Dawsonrentals Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814Ds R661 GCA, S716 KNV and T455 HNV joined this fleet in February, presumably on loan. It was reported at that time that they had replaced some of the Dennis Dart SLF buses acquired last year.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST

Wright NimBus B31F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811Ds 253-6 (J417/1/2/07 PRW) were transferred to this fleet in January from Stagecoach West & Wales; Wright Handybus B29F-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDLs 487/9 (NDZ 3147/9) were transferred in the opposite direction in exchange.

Volvo B10M-62 620 has been given a map of service 10 (Inverness-Aberdeen) on the rear. Volvo Olympian 103; Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 345-7, 354/5; Volvo B6 467; and Volvo B10M-62s 530, 655 have been repainted into the new corporate livery.

Stagecoach Fife ST

Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympian N330 HGK has been numbered 717 and allocated to St Andrews depot. Similar N321 HGK arrived from London in February; N321-9 HGK are to be numbered 708-16 and are expected to be split between Cowdenbeath (708-13) and Aberhill (714-6).

Volvo B10M-55 341 and Volvo B10M-62s 532/5 have been repainted into the new corporate livery.

Alexander ALX300 B42F-bodied MAN 18.220 279 (SP51 AMO) was transferred to Stagecoach Oxford in February.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST

Alexander PS B51F-bodied Volvo B10M-55s 527-9 (H617-9 ACK) were transferred to this fleet in February from Stagecoach Red & White where they were numbered 740-2. All three entered service in different liveries; 527 in the old corporate livery; 528 in a mainly black advertising livery for 4 Plus BMW, applied by its previous owner, with the old corporate livery on the front; and 529 in the new corporate livery. Similar 544 is also in the new livery.

Group codes	
AA	— Arriva Passenger Services
DG	— DelGro
FG	— FirstGroup
NX	— National Express Group
RN	— Rapsons
ST	— Stagecoach Group
YT	— Traction Group

Left: Stagecoach Fife, in connection with City of Edinburgh Council and the new Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, has begun operating city services within the Scottish capital for the first time. Alexander Dash-bodied Dennis Dart 652 (L652 HKS) is seen at the new infirmary site at Little France on hourly service 54 to the city centre. RICHARD WALTER

Left: E455 SON is one of three ex-Arriva Merseyside MkII MCW Metrobuses acquired by Prentice, West Calder. All began life with London Buses on its short-lived Harrow Buses network and were owned by Great Yarmouth Transport before moving to Merseyside in 1995. ALAN MILLAR



Stagecoach Western ST

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 2, 32/4/5, 268; Volvo B10MA-55s 162/92; Volvo B6 339; and Volvo B10M-55s 517/8 have been repainted into the new corporate livery.

Leyland-bodied Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR 987 (NUW 634Y) has been transferred back to Stagecoach North East while Plaxton Interurban-bodied Volvo B10M-62s 107/9 (P107/9 FRS) and 117 (R117 OPS) have been transferred to Stagecoach Red & White.

Leyland-bodied Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR 957 (OHV 800Y) has been written off following engine difficulties, while similar 949 (A876 SUL), 984-6 (NUW 604/39/42Y) have been sold.

Strathtay YT

Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Olympians 952/3 have been repainted into the blue rear coach livery.

Stuart, Carluke

Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsa B55-10 OSC 50V was sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in January but subsequently passed into preservation in the Glasgow area.

Tulloch, Forres

Optare CityPacer B25F-bodied Volkswagen LT55 D344 JUM and Howletts M15-bodied Mazda E2000 J418 KFP were acquired from Reid, Rhynie in October and November respectively.

Walker, Fochabers

Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B58-56 A218 DJS (A178 DJS, OJS 317) was purchased in November ex-Reid, Rhynie. Its chassis dates from 1978 and its body from 1983. Duple-bodied Volvo B58-56 FON 980V passed to Reid at that time.

Watermill, Fraserburgh

Caetano C49Fi-bodied Volvo B10M-62 HSK 815 (N85 LSE) was acquired in October from Reid, Rhynie. Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 VRY 357 moved in the opposite direction at that time.

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

The four Wright Eclipse-bodied Volvo B7L buses on order are due for delivery around July and will be used to upgrade the Hamilton-Coalburn service to low-floor operation.

GCZ 9023, the Wright Eclipse B41F-bodied Volvo B7L demonstrator in blue and white Ulsterbus Translink livery, which has been on loan since December, was re-registered X381 XON in January at the request of the Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency. It is likely to remain in the fleet until the arrival of the new buses mentioned above.

With reference to the February issue, after leaving the White, Bridge of Walls fleet, Wright Crusader-bodied Volvo B6LE-50 N416 KPS was on extended loans initially to First Manchester and subsequently to Yorkshire Traction, before joining this fleet.

All remaining Volvo B10B buses were sold last year, comprising Northern Counties Paladin B51F-bodied K740 LHP, L52-4 UNS; Alexander Strider B51F-bodied L57-9 UNS; and Plaxton Verde B51F-bodied M875 NWK. Of these, L52/3 UNS passed to the Oxford Bus Company in February, Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R GSO 78V was sold to Grangeburn, Motherwell in December without being used.

Wilson, Rhu

Y263 KNB is an Alexander ALX200-bodied Dennis Dart SLF that was new last May.

Wishart, Frioekheim NX

Duple 320-bodied Dennis Javelin W244 (PSU 339) has been repainted into the new Scottish Citylink livery.

Woods, Tillicoultry

Ford Transit P988 XTY was sold to Holloway (dealer), Willenhall in September and passed subsequently to Curness, Blantyre.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

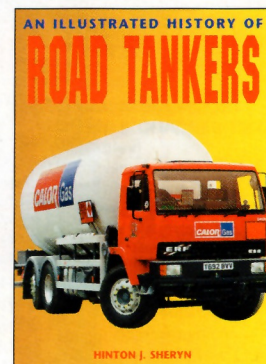
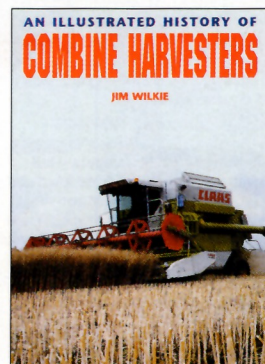
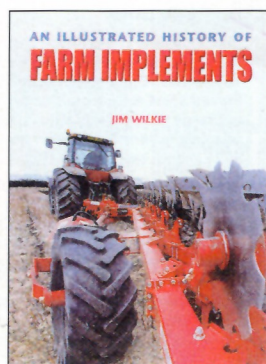
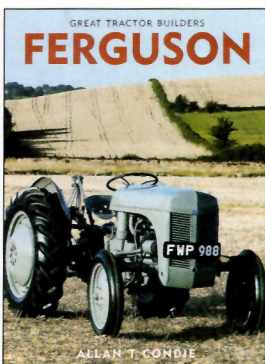
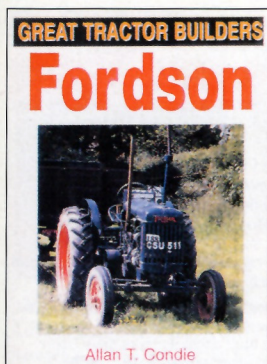
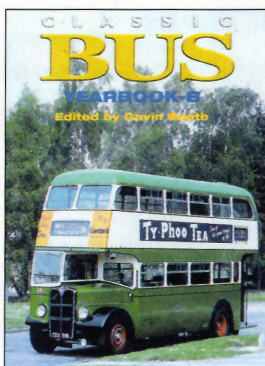
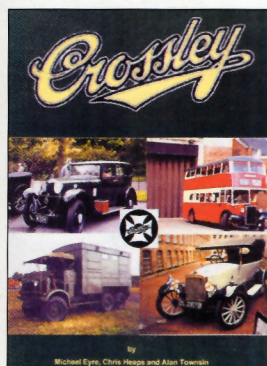
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FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Watermill Coach Services
BASED:	College Bounds, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire
FOUNDED:	Allan Clark and Brian Smith founded a motor vehicle repair and wedding hires business in Fraserburgh in 1979. They bought their first coach four years later and began to undertake hires and school contracts with assorted Bedfords and Fords. In 1990, they acquired the business of Drew Cadger of Peterhead, giving the firm a second operating centre that remains today. A third operating centre was developed in 1997 at Ythanbank in Ellon, the expansion being necessary owing to the amount of contract work being undertaken by that time. The first double-deckers arrived the same year and the first new vehicle, Mercedes-Benz 711D R111 WCS, was purchased in 1998. New vehicles were all given triple-numeral-with-WCS marks until the advent of the new registration system last year.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	A standard national licence is held, so tour work undertaken is within the United Kingdom, either arranged by the company or on behalf of local tour companies. School contracts and private hires, including some football hires for recognised supporters' clubs, are also carried out. Local service work has grown in importance in recent years, with a Peterhead town service having been run commercially during the past four or five years. When Aberdeen City Council withdrew all service subsidies in 2000, the company continued to run the City Centre-Aberdeen Airport route commercially for a year before giving it up. Other routes are operated under contract, either for Tesco in Aberdeen or for Aberdeenshire Council, including Ellon town service, Fraserburgh-Rosehearty, Peterhead-Stuartfield and Peterhead-Hatton.
LIVERY:	At the start vehicles were white with red, orange and yellow stripes. A white and gold livery was adopted in 1991, but this is now being changed to white with purple flash and fleetnames.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	The operator licence allows for 40, and 37 are in use at present comprising 14 double-deckers, 14 minibuses and nine full-size coaches. The wedding hires business is still maintained, and five limousines are owned for this work.
MOST UNUSUAL VEHICLE?:	A Windsor Imperial-bodied Mercedes-Benz LP813 and a Neoplan Jetliner have been owned in the past, but with mainly Volvo coaches and Mercedes-Benz minibuses now, the more unusual vehicles in the current fleet are in the double-decker section — a pair of Neoplan Skyliners and no fewer than 12 of the East Lancs-bodied Ailsas previously in the Tayside fleet.

YSV 797 (E476 YWJ), a 77-seat Neoplan Skyliner N122/3, in what appears to be a non-standard version of Watermill's livery. It had several Scottish and English previous owners, and was with Q Transport of Greenock immediately before Watermill acquired it in March 1999. IAIN MacGREGOR





TOWN & COUNTRY

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**IRISH MAJOR
OPERATORS****Ulsterbus**

One new vehicle reported is Renault Master 89 (FCZ 7086), which Translink has supplied to voluntary groups for operation in the Coleraine area. It was financed by the Rural Transport Fund.

Leyland Tiger/Alexander N-type 1178 (MXI 3178) is back in service following an electrical fire and has been transferred from Newtownards to Armagh. Similar 429 (GXI 429) at Omagh has been delicensed following accident damage, while Volvo B10M/Alexander Q-type 1534 (DAZ 1534) at Belfast (Great Victoria Street) is off with engine fire damage. Surprising news is that the chassis of Volvo-engined Tiger/N-type 1314 (PXI 1314) — destroyed in July 1996 — has been recovered from Beattie's scrapyard at Hillsborough and was noted recently in Falls Park workshops, presumably for cannibalisation of its mechanical units.

Routine withdrawals have seen Coleraine-based Bristol RELL6G/Alexander 2441 (WOI 2441) delicensed and placed in reserve, while similar 1980-registered 2386 (VOI 2386) has been added to the growing collection at the Glasgow Bus Museum; 2386 spent much of its life in the Londonderry area.

Withdrawn Leyland Leopard 128 (ROI 128) has been re-registered LCZ 9742 (perhaps only on paper); as in previous similar cases, its desirable original mark has been transferred on to a private car.

Citybus Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 2929 (HCZ 9929) has gone on loan to Bangor to provide additional seating capacity on the temporary rail replacement service between the seaside town and Belfast, while Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 2824 (CCZ 8824) has gone to Citybus in its place. This is presumably to cover for B7TL 2936 (HCZ 2936) while its roof is repaired following a low bridge accident.

Craigavon-based Mercedes-Benz 711D/Alexander 918 (JAZ 3918) is in a new all-over advertising livery for Friar Tuck Restaurant.

Citybus

Further to my report in January 'Fleet News', Bristol RELL6G/Alexander 2490/7 (XOI 2490/7) have been recovered from Beattie's scrapyard and noted at Falls Park workshops. However, 2490 is only a hulk and may have been recovered to donate mechanical units. Meanwhile, similar 2511 (XOI 2511) has been pronounced withdrawn following an accident last May.

As reported under the Ulsterbus heading, Volvo B7TL 2929 has been lent to that fleet in exchange for its Volvo B10BLE 2824.

Leyland Tigers 2640/67 (SXI 2640, VXI 2667) have lost their 7-Up overall advertising liveries while similar 2677 (VXI 2677) has lost its Donegall Arcade livery; all are back in red/cream fleet colours.

Dublin Bus

The process of minibus attrition continues with Ringsend's last examples, Mercedes-Benz 709D/Eurocoach B29F ME40/4/6 (95 D 33040/4/6) having recently been withdrawn; their place on Tallaght Localink routes 201/2 has been taken by VW-class Volvo B6BLEs. Ringsend route 83 — the first City Imp high-frequency minibus route in April 1992 — has reverted to big bus operation using Leyland Olympians (RH8-15) on Mondays to Saturdays on a temporary basis pending its replacement by extended route 134, using Broadstone-based AV-class Volvo B7TLs.

Thirty-one 29-seat Mercedes minibuses advertised for sale in February are understood to comprise 16 ME-class 709Ds (ME36-51?) and 811D/Leicester Carriage Builders ML21-35. This appears to contradict earlier reports of likely transfers to Bus Éireann. ME42/7 both continue in temporary use at Phibsboro, ME42 because it has an overall advertising livery for the Museumlink service.

New Broadstone-based Volvo B7TLs AV213-8 remained in temporary storage in late-February, but their entry into service was expected imminently.

Since mid-February, most Donnybrook AVs have had their dot matrix destination displays modified to flash intermittently in English and Irish, but they also display most destinations in what can only be described as giant size lettering. The plan is to extend their use to all buses with dot matrix displays, starting with Donnybrook Volvo Olympians RV460, 550-69/76-9.

The early-February conversion of route 10 to entirely AW-class Volvo B7LA articulated operation has been deferred for a few weeks.

Bus Éireann

Further Scania L94IB/Irizar InterCentury commuter coaches confirmed in service at Broadstone are SR4, 10/3/4, 23/8. Broadstone-based Volvo B7R/Plaxton Primas VR34-6 have gone to Limerick, but the exchange of VR50 with Volvo B10M/Caetano VC143 was only temporary, and they have returned to Galway and Limerick respectively.

At the time of writing, new Volvo B7L/Wright Eclipse VWL131-4 and Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer DPC22-32, 101-11 had yet to enter service. The Volvos are at Cork, while the most recently known plan is for DPC22 to be allocated to Dundalk (Drogheda) for a new Balbriggan town service, while DPC23-32 will replace Cork's leased Darts DP1-10, which are being returned before the agreed lease expiry date of August 2002. Once DPC101-11 arrive in Waterford, DPC1-4 will be released to Sligo and DPC5, 6 will transfer to Athlone to augment (rather than replace) Mercedes-Benz 811Ds ME206/7 on an enhanced town service.

Athlone's new nine-bay Midlands bus station was expected to open on 4 March, with an official ceremony in April. To coincide with its opening, service 020 (Dublin-Galway) is to be enhanced with earlier and later departures. All this comes in the context of a court case last year in which private operator Nestor Bus successfully challenged Bus Éireann's dominant position on the Dublin-Galway corridor.

Another Leyland Lynx LX112L10ZR1R/B49F received from Nottingham City Transport for schools work is F742 HRC; neither its LS-class fleetnumber nor its Irish registration is yet known.

Ex-Singapore Volvo B57/New Zealand Motor Bodies

B52F school buses withdrawn at Athlone, Limerick and Thurles are VS52/3/5, 60/2/4/6-70, 84, 92/5/7/9 (81 D 1618, 1492, 1542, 1620, 1584/18/93/48/68, 1623/4/09, 1570, 1628, 1503/74), VS101 (80 D 1092), VS142/4/82/4 (82 D 2361/71, 2498/7), VS185 (81 D 1681), VS204 (82 D 2530), VS219-21/37/41/69 (83 D 3677/96/7, 3749/809/97). It's noteworthy that Limerick, with possibly the largest schools fleets within Bus Éireann, had only 16 operational VSs at the last count. All Limerick's PL-class Leyland Tigers have been allocated to schools work, with PLS84, 116/9/20 based at Thurles.

Cork's Leyland Tiger/Alexander TE-type TES4 has gained a livery similar to that on the KR-class GAC rural buses and most of its CVS/EVS-type coaches.

Mercedes-Benz O.404 MH14 has been transferred from Limerick to Cork; it was loaned to Sligo last summer for service 066 (Sligo-Westport). Dot matrix destination displays have been fitted to MH14/6, 20.

IRISH INDEPENDENTS**Chambers, Moneymore**

There has been a large turnover in this Co. Londonderry fleet.

New Ayats Bravo 1 double-deck coaches X77, 88 CCH have replaced similar V11, 111 CCH (HJI 682, B4 AVO). Scania L94IB/Irizar Century C49F YN51 MHA/E/F/J/M/O/U/X-Z (in a new yellow livery instead of white) have replaced L94IB/Van Hool V2-5, 22, 33, 44, 55, 66, 77, 88 CCH.

All of the V-CCH registrations have been retained, with V22 CCH going on to brand new Mercedes-Benz Vario O.814D/KVC C13F CNZ 2336, which is fitted out for golfing parties. V33 CCH has gone on to new Vario O.814D/Eurocoach C24F ANZ 9558. V44, 55, 66, 77 CCH have gone on to new Mercedes-Benz Atego 1120L/Eurocoach C45F, while Mercedes 413CDI ANZ 1860, 1679 are the new V4, 111 CCH, Mercedes Sprinter 412D/KVC YIW 6262/61 are the new V3, 5 CCH, and Vario/Eurocoach XIW 9512, 7156 are the new V11, 88 CCH. V2 CCH has been transferred to a private car.

Rare Mercedes-Benz OH1416/Wright Urbanrangers R77, 88, 99 CCH have been sold to the Western Education & Library Board at Omagh, with similar R66 CCH expected to follow. Registrations R77, 99 CCH have been transferred to Vario/Eurocoach WIW 4920, 2639, while R88 CCH has been transferred to Sprinter/Eurocoach WIW 4919.

Pending their imminent sale, Volvo B7R/Plaxton Prima S77, 88, 99 CCH have been re-registered CNZ 3823/9/33 and their original marks have been transferred to Vario/Eurocoach WIW 7572, 9951/2 respectively.

Also sold are Sprinter 412D/Eurocoach WIW 2640 and 412D/KVC YIW 6263 to Belfast Bus Company, 412D/KVC YIW 6290 to Minicoach, Newtownabbey and Vario O.814D/Turkington WIW 4922 to Magherafelt Free Presbyterian Church.

Mercedes 108D people carrier XJI 9270 has been re-registered PRC 888.

Dualway (McConn), Rathcoole

With minimum notice, Route 2411 (Tallaght, the Square Shopping Centre-Dublin Airport) ceased permanently from Saturday evening 2 February, after approximately 18 months' operation. Initially, it went via the M50 motorway and was operated using double-deckers, but was later altered to serve many south and north side suburbs and was run mainly with ex-Dublin Bus minibuses. The service was poorly patronised, but the company blamed its withdrawal on difficulties with bus stop access.

**J.J. Kavanagh/Rapid
Express, Ulingford**

Eleven new Mercedes-powered Setras — 02 CW 1, 02 WD 1, 02 TN 1, 02 TS 1, 02 KK 1, 02 D 11, 02 W 11, 02 KE 11, 02 KK 11, 02 TN 11, 02 WD 11 — have joined the fleet since early-January, maintaining the style of registrations begun with MAN-powered Van Hool Acron integral 93 KK 1. Setra 02 D 11 is the first known example of a new Kavanagh vehicle being registered in Dublin. Current arrangements prohibit the reservation of 02 D 1 as the first Dublin registration has been set aside each year since 1990 for the Lord Mayor's official car. Although the company generally obtains 1 and 11-suffixed registrations from most south-eastern counties, it has gone farther afield (e.g. to Cavan and Roscommon) and in 1999 most of its new coaches had 111 suffixes. For relatively little outlay, the practice gives great distinctiveness to the fleet and has even been extended to a van used by the JJK Bus Parts subsidiary.

At 13 February, total fleet strength (including the former Kenneally, Waterford operations) came to 65 vehicles, with some of the more notable double-deckers being former British Airways AEC Routemaster RMA22 and

Below: The new yellow livery of Chambers, Moneymore on YN51 MHX and one of its other recently delivered Irizar-bodied Scania coaches. They were photographed in Belfast between journeys on its Derry-Belfast express operated in competition with Ulsterbus.

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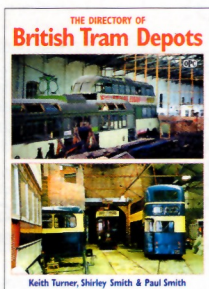
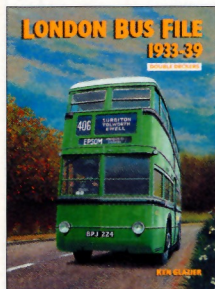
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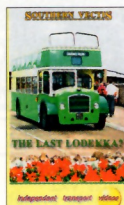
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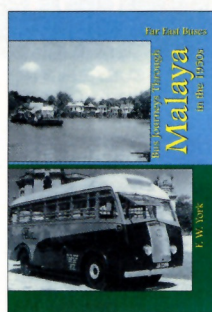
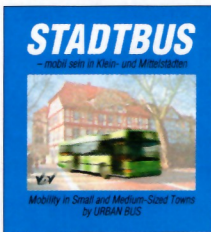
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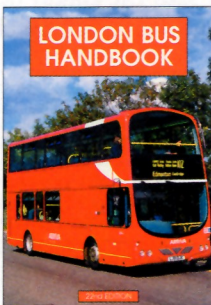


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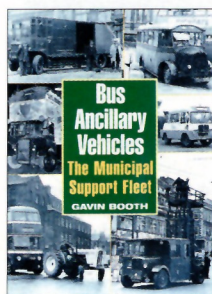
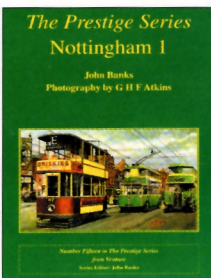


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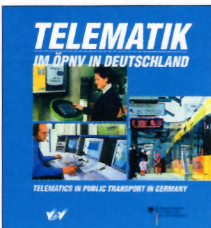


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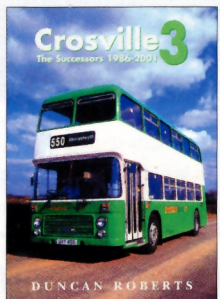


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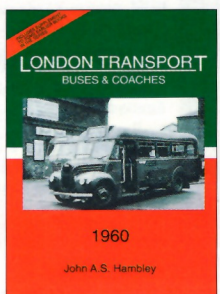
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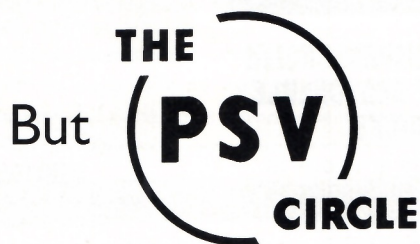
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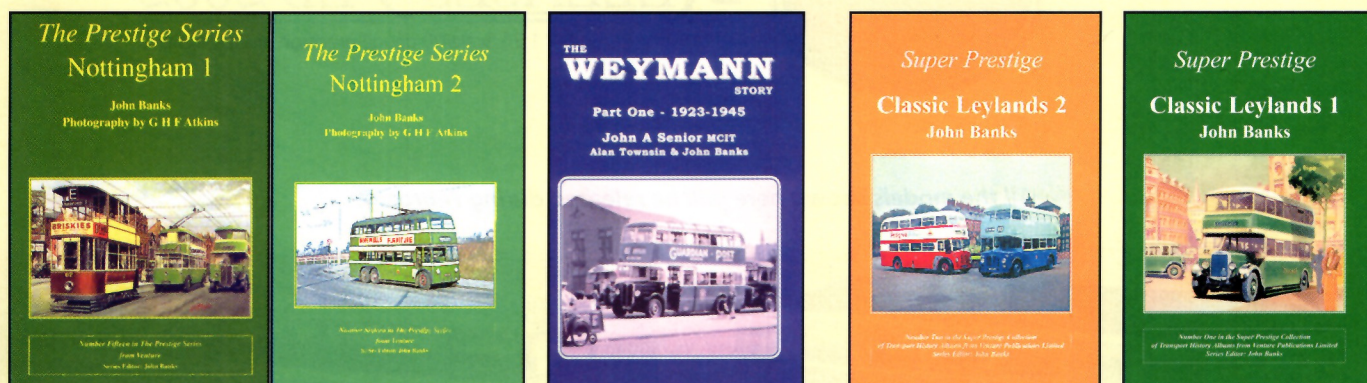
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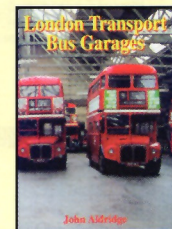
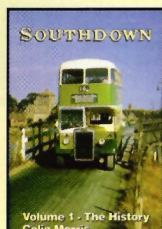
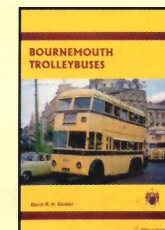
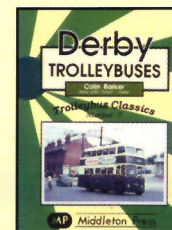
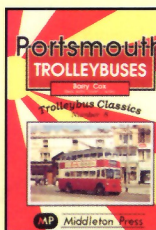
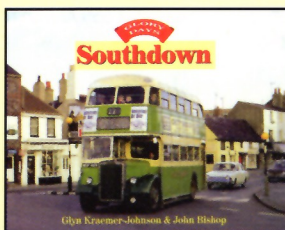
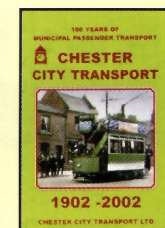
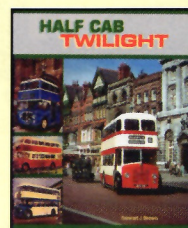
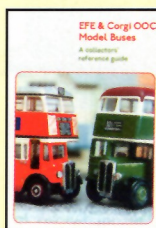
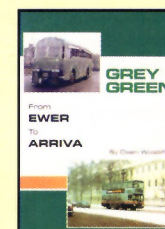
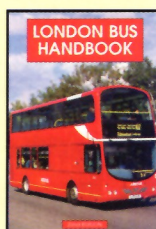
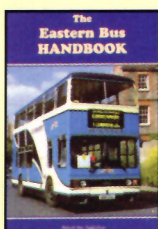
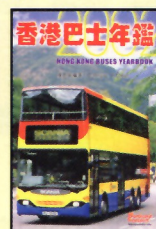
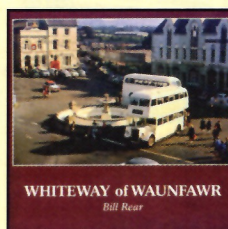
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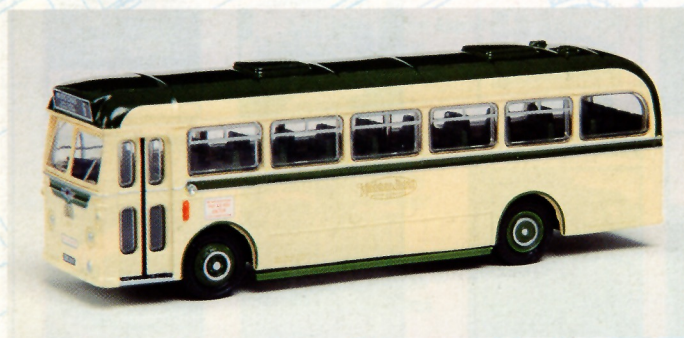
E99641 Bedford TK Artic BRITISH RAILWAYS Gilbow Railway Series

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20127 Bedford OB Coach LIVERPOOL CORPORATION

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